The Rural Community and Social Case Work

JOSEPHINE C. BROWN

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JOSEPHINE C. BROWN

FAMILY WELFARE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

THE overwhelming needs of emergency family relief during the past three years have overshadowed other forms of public and private welfare activities. During the ten or twelve years preceding the depression there had been developing a movement for the organization of social service in county units, especially in the public field, that held great promise of gradually adapting to the needs of rural communities and small towns the methods of constructive social work usually found only in large centers of population. The Federal Children's Bureau, in a series of publications beginning in 1922, stressed the importance of county organization for child care and protection, particularly as related to the problems of rural and small-town communities. In the period from 1917 to 1919 six states inaugurated state-wide programs of public welfare or child welfare boards in county units, whose functions were defined by law. In several other states county organization of welfare work was promoted by state departments or by private organizations in certain areas and with a more limited range of activities.

New impetus was given by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930.

The Committee on National, State, and Local Organization for the Handicapped placed great stress upon the need for social service in county units, defining a complete program as including: "(1) Case work service to discover and inquire into the circumstances and difficulties of children and families who are in need of public care and protection, and to devise and carry through individualized treatment; (2) resources for the various types of treatment, providing the care or protection which will be most useful in each case; (3) public funds to meet the cost of both service and support."

The nation-wide program for emergency relief, though for the time being eclipsing activities that appear to be less urgent, is in fact emphasizing the need for unification of public services and the application of social work standards, even though in a rudimentary form. In at least three of the states which had developed a state-wide system of county public welfare boards, this organization made immediately available facilities for handling the relief problem throughout the state. In most states the almost complete absence of any form of social service in rural and small town communities has been brought forcibly to the attention of state and Federal relief administrations. The lesson that is being learned through the necessities of economical and humane relief administration cannot fail to make some permanent impression upon the future development of social service in the small centers of

population which have been so generally neglected in the past. Socialization of public relief agencies, especially in rural communities, may prove to be the nucleus of a broad program of co-ordinated family service and relief and child care and protection, administered by staffs equipped for social service.

This book offers concrete suggestions not only for immediate steps but for a long-time program in carrying forward the development of social work activities in our rural communities. Miss Brown writes from the experience she herself gained as a social worker in a county and from the no less important findings which she gleaned from rural social workers during the period that she served as Associate Field Director of the Family Welfare Association of America, the organization with which she is still affiliated. She speaks both to laymen and to professional workers at a moment when her words have a particularly timely significance.

EMMA O. LUNDBERG,
Director of Research and Statistics, Temporary Emergency Relief Administration, New York.

May, 1933

THE RURAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CASE WORK

I. FAMILY LIFE IN THE COUNTRY

RURAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS

IN a rural county in the Middle West not many years ago a boy of fourteen was brought into court for truancy and night riding. He was a surly, handsome boy, as hardheaded as his brilliant, dissipated father. He was known as the neighborhood "wild boy," the despair of the county attorney. His mother was incompetent and his three brothers were known as "simple." [1] It is not difficult to visualize the future of this family and their effect upon the life of the sparsely settled community in which they lived; the increasing dissipation of the father and his temptation to desertion, aggravated by the mother's incompetency and her inability to make their home attractive; the delinquency of the "wild boy," developing into a career of crime and a pernicious influence on other boys in the neighborhood; the "simple" brothers growing up, untrained and unlettered, to marry and establish homes which in their turn become sore spots in the community.

[1] Mrs. J. D. Baskett: "Undifferentiated Case Work Through the Medium of Rural Schools." *Proceedings* of the National Conference of Social Work, 1928, p. 85.

In another county the wife of a prosperous farmer became insane and was sent to a hospital. People in the neighborhood said that the father was overworking and mistreating his boys and no one knew what to do about it. What part had isolation, overwork, and lack of modern conveniences in the home played in the mental condition of this mother? To what extent did the father justify his attitude toward the boys by the tradition that play is a waste of time when there is so much work to be done? Another well-to-do farmer so overworked his twelve-year-old son that the child ran away from home.

These instances are drawn at random from the actual experiences of officials and citizens in rural communities. That such situations and others of a similar nature are not confined to a few localities will be admitted by every thoughtful country citizen who looks about him for conditions which not only harm the families in which they exist but which menace the well-being of the community. A leader of the Country Life Movement, who has long been a sympathetic student of rural life, has graphically pictured the situation:

> If we face facts, we shall find that there is ample cause for alarm with respect to rural life conditions. We can easily find rural areas so isolated that loneliness reigns supreme, with the attendant evils of constant drudgery, unrelieved monotony, even of insanity and other forms of decadence. There are farm homes almost completely lacking in comfort, convenience, or even in the mere elements of refinement. There are rural schools of a half-dozen pupils, housed in an unkempt box of

a building, taught by a half-trained teacher who is paid most meager wages. . . . There are farmers who rarely take any recreation or permit their children to have it. There are places where the generally accepted rules of public health are unknown or unenforced, even places where common decencies are not observed. . . . There are areas of child neglect and abuse, of immorality and even of crime. . . . We may not say that these facts are isolated and therefore not characteristic, for they exist far too frequently; nor call attention to the great multitude of instances where precisely opposite conditions prevail, for you can't drain a swamp merely by looking at a three-ton field of growing meadow. . . . We would best admit that such things exist and that they are a menace. We have often been shortsighted with respect to them, because they are not all true of any one region, because there are so many instances of better things, because in some cases we are ignorant of their existence, and also, sometimes because we accept them as a part of the situation and not as a challenge to improvement.[2]

There is ample evidence that leaders in the rural field and citizens of many counties are facing these facts and accepting the challenge they present. During the past fifteen years rural communities have shown an increasing interest in programs of social welfare. Much of this interest has been due to concern about just such acute problems as those described above. In many counties it has been aroused by conditions existing among "the county poor." Both public officials and private citizens have viewed with alarm the large sums of money spent annually by their counties upon dependent families whose condition appears not to be improved but to be made worse thereby. They see the same families asking

[2] K. L. Butterfield: *The Farmer and the New Day.* Macmillan, 1919, p. 60.

for help year after year, receiving the same monthly "doles" and becoming more and more dependent, their homes dirtier, their children more neglected and often delinquent.

The Rural Family. Family life in the country is inextricably bound up with the business upon which the family depends for support, so much so that farming has been called a distinct mode of living. The family dwelling is in the midst of the daily activities which are shared by every member of the family. To this is due in no small measure a family life on the whole more stable and enduring than that found in cities.

Thus with the rural family has been associated much of our strength of character, idealism, democracy and high achievment as a nation.[3]

Everywhere in the country districts married life begins earlier for both sexes, lasts longer before being broken by divorce or death, and if thus broken, is more likely to be succeeded by a new union than in the larger cities.[4]

A farm woman has said:

"You don't think of your home on a farm as just a space inside four walls. The feeling of home spreads out all around into the garden, the orchards, the henhouses, the barn, the springhouse, because you are all the time helping to produce live things on those places and they or their products, are all the time coming back into your kitchen from garden, orchard, barn, or henhouse, as a part of the thing you handle and prepare for meals or market every day. It is one of those peculiarities of making a home on the farm." [5]

[3] N. L. Sims: *Elements of Rural Sociology.* Crowell, 1928, p. 253.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 250.
[5] Sawtell, quoted by Sims: *ibid.,* p. 263.

The very fact of isolation—the separation of the family from their nearest neighbors by broad acres on all sides, the distance from the nearest hamlet or town—intensifies the influence of home life upon all the members of the family. This influence far outweighs that of any other social institution in the countryside. It tends to be a constant factor, creating a more stable environment than that to which city dwellers are subject.

Thus the home rather than the community determines the family standard of living. It is the center of all activities. The close association of all members of the family creates an inter-dependence which is not found in the city. The father and mother are partners in a business enterprise and the children share in this responsibility as well as in the work of the farm. The entire family take counsel together.

It is a wide-spread custom for each member to participate in household discussions, projects, plans, policies and procedures that pertain to all individually and collectively. This custom tends not only to hold the family together and give it unusual solidarity but it also affords valuable training in the habits of democratic citizenship.[6]

This inter-dependence—this sense of sharing—deepens the affection of the members of the family for one another and goes far to promote sympathetic understanding; and may account to some extent for the unusual ability of the farm family to

[6] N. L. Sims: *Elements of Rural Sociology.* Crowell, 1928, pp. 256-257.

adjust as a whole to the vicissitudes of living—to times of failure, of poor crops and price depression, as well as to times of prosperity.

The very isolation which fosters this solidarity, however, is also a handicap. Contact with others is limited not only by distance but by opportunity. Participation in community life is restricted. Other families in the neighborhood are often related and usually have the same occupations and interests, often the same standards and ideals. Thus the farm family as a rule is deprived of that stimulation which comes from association with people of varied interests and occupations. Such a narrowing of horizons tends to throw the members of the family back upon one another, forcing adjustments which not only tend to level personality differences but often engender an intense family loyalty which may result in clannishness or, in extreme instances, in bitter family feuds. Galpin believes that this restricted contact with people and with the human mind explains the "weak spot in rural economy," the "menaced social status of the American farmer," and "the weakness of rural initiative." He proposes "human contacts, more human contacts, and still more human contacts" as "the slogan remedy of this problem of rural organization." [7]

While the extensive use of automobiles and the constant increase in the number of improved roads have made possible in many districts more frequent

[7] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life.* Century, 1923, p. 57.

contacts with the outside world, there are still thousands of farms in out-of-the-way places and whole communities in some parts of the country where isolation is still an important factor. Increased facilities for transportation have brought their own problems too. But even in the communities where these facilities are found, the far-reaching influences of isolation are still to be felt, and family life is in a stage of transition—adjusting itself to new conditions.

The Farm Wife. The place of the woman in the farm home is unique. Not only is she the business partner of her husband, sharing his responsibilities, but she is the center of all the activities of house and farm. She is teacher, counsellor, "the discerner of family psychologies," the one who "smoothes out the wrinkles of family individualism." [8] Her manual labor is varied, exacting, and almost endless. Her hours, often fourteen to sixteen a day, are as long if not longer than those of anyone else on the farm. In addition to the usual household tasks she often cares for the milk and makes butter for market. Usually the garden and chickens are her responsibility and she sometimes helps with the milking. It is not surprising that she often grows old before her time and that she suffers from a chronic fatigue, a fatigue which blunts her spirit and seriously limits her capacity to be of service to her family and to the community.

[8] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life, ibid.,* p. 104.

Not only must the farm woman perform a great variety of tasks during her long working hours but on the great majority of farms this work must be done without the conveniences which are taken for granted by the city housewife. Every drop of water must be pumped by hand or dipped from the rain barrel and carried into the house. Stoves or fireplaces must be tended and the wood and ashes add materially to her cleaning problem. Electricity is as yet available on but few farms. This involves the lighting question but it also means that the home is deprived of numerous time- and labor-saving devices, including the electric washing-machine. On many farms where modern barns and up-to-date farm machinery lighten the farmer's work, the house—the workshop of the farmer's wife—still lacks the simplest conveniences. Economic necessity has dictated this order of development but it is of the utmost importance that the farmer who can afford household conveniences should consider the human values and the enrichment of family life to be gained by furnishing them.

Dr. Garnett asks most pertinently:

> What is responsible for the lack of home conveniences and overwork on the part of the mother in so many homes? Is it ignorance? Or indifference? Or the lack of income needful for providing labor-saving devices? [9]

[9] W. E. Garnett: "Some Socially Significant Rural Conditions." Rural Sociology Publication 2, Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas, p. 13.

The significance of the problem is thus stated by Butterfield:

> Woman's place in farm life is the severest test agriculture has to face. If farm life cannot give the farm woman opportunity for real growth, for something besides mere drudgery, our rural civilization cannot go on. Nevertheless, the farm woman's career will always be found largely in the home itself and she rises or not just as the farm home becomes or fails to become what it ought to be.[10]

The Farmer. "The American farmer is soilsman, horticulturalist, animal husbandman, dairyman, orchardist, teamster, engineer, marketer, economist," [11] and to be successful he must also be a good business manager and executive. No other occupation makes such varied demands upon the capacities of the worker. The success or failure of his enterprise depends to a great extent upon the weather, an uncertain factor over which he has no control. His work is out-of-doors, with the soil and with plants and animals. He works chiefly alone. He is compelled to solve his problems on the basis of his own experience or according to tradition. He plans his own work and directs that of his family. These conditions have determined his temperament, character, and attitudes. He is likely to be independent, with a quality of leadership and initiative. He finds co-operation difficult and may be an extreme individualist. He is deliberate, cautious, con-

[10] K. L. Butterfield: "The Place of the Home in the Farmers' Movement." *Proceedings,* National Conference on Country Life, 1923, p. 6.

[11] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life.* Century, 1923, p. 23.

servative, and thrifty. The farmer's relationship to his family tends to be patriarchal and his rule is usually rigorous. He demands and receives their respect, loyalty, and obedience.

The Child on the Farm. The child on the farm who finds his own playground in the range of the open fields and his pets in the farm animals and whose work projects are suited to his health and strength by watchful parents, has an unexcelled opportunity to develop self-reliance, self-control, initiative, and habits of industry. Unfortunately, however, in a great many farm homes the children are thought of as financial assets. Even in prosperous homes this is often the case, for the "work tradition" holds full sway and play is considered a waste of time. Participation in the work of the farm which is shared by every other member of the family and the joy of creative effort which comes from contact with growing things are a precious heritage of the country child and a privilege denied less fortunate city children. But when this work becomes drudgery, when it imperils health and exposes the child to the risk of serious accidents, when it requires extended absences from school and deprives the child of opportunity for a reasonable amount of play, normal development is impossible. The child suffers and through him the rural home and rural society as a whole suffer.

The Fourteenth Census (1920) shows that over 600,000 children between 10 and 16 years of age

were gainfully employed in agriculture. This figure, of course, does not include children who work on their home farms. Since 1920 the Industrial Division of the Federal Children's Bureau has made studies of children engaged in agricultural work in typical farming areas in different parts of the country, involving interviews with approximately 13,500 children under 16, engaged in full time (though usually seasonal) labor in fourteen states. These studies include information not only about migratory child laborers and children living at home and gainfully employed on neighboring farms, but also about children working on their home farms.[12] Reports of these studies (which may be secured from the Bureau) show serious loss of schooling, long hours, and heavy and sometimes hazardous work, resulting in excessive fatigue and in some cases permanent injury.

Labor of children on their home farms is essentially a rural family problem. Proper enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws may succeed in regulating it to some extent, but in the last analysis the solution lies within the family itself. It depends upon the extent to which the farmer learns to evaluate the well-being of his children, as against the time-honored "work tradition," and if poverty has forced him to overwork his children, may not a realization of their needs stimulate him to improve his

[12] Grace Abbott: "Standards of Rural Child Welfare." *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work, 1927, p. 31.

economic status by the adoption of better farming methods or perhaps by an entire change of occupation?

> The farmer himself needs to be educated to a wiser attitude toward childhood before much headway can be made in bettering conditions.[13]

Changes in Rural Life. Rural family life has been deeply affected, particularly in the neighborhood of villages and towns and among the more prosperous farm families, by many significant changes in social trends. Galpin calls attention to the fact that during the two hundred years from 1710 to 1910 the rural population and presumably the farm population gradually increased in numbers, but since the latter date has shown an absolute decline.[14] He looks upon the early two-hundred-year period as "one block of rural life history" and considers "the collapse in the growth of the farm population beginning in 1910 and continuing to 1927 as a significant index of a transition—in fact, a transition marking a crisis in rural life history." [15]

Foremost among the changes which mark this transition period are the introduction of modern farm machinery; the dissemination of technical agricultural knowledge; the growth of farmers' organizations, particularly co-operatives; better roads;

[13] N. L. Sims: *Elements of Rural Sociology.* Crowell, 1928, p. 206.
[14] The 1930 Census shows an increase over the population in 1920.
[15] C. J. Galpin: "Rural Life Progress." *Proceedings,* Tenth National Country Life Conference, 1927, p. 18.

widespread use of the automobile; rural postal delivery; the telephone, and the radio. The increased number of contacts with town and city people, stores, and amusements are breaking down the old isolation. A scientific attitude toward farming is beginning to include other aspects of living and finds itself at variance with the old traditions and accepted beliefs and attitudes. The old country neighborhood is giving way to the wider community about the larger and more distant trading center. There is more leisure, the home has more conveniences. The children who attend consolidated schools and the farm women who join a village club have new interests and friends outside the home and neighborhood groups. Family life is less stable, less a center of all activities.

Although these changes have affected to a marked extent the more prosperous farm neighborhoods, and are gradually exerting their influence over far wider circles, there are thousands of farm families still touched very little, if at all, by them. On these farms the problems of isolation and the old attitudes remain unchanged.

Dr. J. M. Williams points out:

> The slowness with which attitudes and beliefs change in adaptation to changed conditions is one of the most important lessons to be learned from rural development. Village people changed more rapidly than the rural population. Among the latter changes were conspicuous only in exceptionally prosperous families. The mass of farmers were little affected. The slowness of rural change is of deep scientific interest in that it emphasizes the importance of attitude and belief in rural

behavior; and it is of immense practical interest to rural leaders who aim to direct the processes of rural development.[16]

The families which have felt most deeply and which have benefited largely by the changes in rural life also suffer from all the difficulties and complexities involved in a transition period.

Dr. Williams, who has made a most careful study and thoughtful analysis of the effect of this transition period upon family life, finds evidence of strain and other difficulties growing out of the effort to adjust to the new conditions. There is strain between the farmer and his wife. His work affords him a more satisfying outlet than hers does and he is, therefore, less attracted than she is by social stimulation outside the home. He has the satisfaction of ownership and decides financial questions in accordance with his traditions of thrift, while his wife, eager for goods of which she has read or which she has seen in the homes of her village friends, questions his right to the budgeting of the family income. There is also lack of agreement as to the rearing of the children, "what money they shall be allowed to have, whether they may take the automobile, how much they may have to do with the young people of the village, how much work they should do on the farm, how they shall be educated." [17]

The relationship of the children to their father

[16] J. M. Williams: *The Expansion of Rural Life.* Knopf, 1926, p. 44.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 220.

is changing. The boys whose village friends do not work will not exert themselves as they used to. They rebel against their father's rigorous rules. His authority wanes. His children find other men in other callings more conspicuously successful and consider the farmer's vocation almost a reproach. They come to look down on him, his working clothes, the fact that he does manual labor. They have a certain contempt for his advice and opinions.

If the farmer is what Dr. Williams designates as the "dominating type," he will try to continue the training of early days according to traditional attitudes. If he is "more rivalrous than dominating" he will let things drift as long as the children's behavior does not injure the family standing. But the farmer of "the constructive type tries to understand the different situation of his children as compared with his own when he was young and to modify his own attitudes and train theirs with a view to their welfare in the new conditions." [18] Some farmers who have been very strictly brought up let their children have everything they want. This lenient reaction is apt to result in a situation of pampering and spoiling which may infect the whole neighborhood.

Dr. Williams' analysis is so valuable and his conclusions so important that it is worth while quoting him further:

> They [parents] do not appreciate the new influences at work on their children, nor do they realize how entirely their own

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 226.

opinions are determined by their traditional attitudes. While farmers are being interested in scientific farming and co-operation in order to increase their income, there is no effort being made by any rural agency to enable them to understand what is more important for their peace of mind and progress than increased income, that is, to understand their own attitudes and the new conditions to which they and their children must adjust themselves. . . . Their attitudes constitute the background of their lives and yet they have not reflected enough on this background to realize its nature and limitations.[19]

NEED OF ADJUSTMENTS IN FAMILY LIFE

Dr. Williams strikes a keynote in the difficulties in rural family life during this transition period, and suggests a procedure for meeting these difficulties.

Rural conditions favor an ideal family life. . . . Family life "means more" in the country than in the city because the family is more isolated and the members are more dependent on each other for their happiness. If the relations of the rural family are annoying, the members cannot get away from the annoyance as easily as in the city. Unpleasant relations may cause children to leave home when, in many cases, they are better fitted for farm life than for any other. *The problem of the adjustment of the rural family is, therefore, a vital one* and rural leaders should take it up, particularly the rural clergymen. . . . The minister should be an intimate and far-seeing friend and the family should get, through association with him, a will to agree and an insight into one another's viewpoint. The work of the teacher, also, in this connection has not been emphasized as it should be. She is in constant contact with the children and so is in a position tactfully to shape their relations with their parents. She approaches the subject not from the point of view either of parents or of children but from that of the relation of the family to society.[20]

[19] J. M. Williams: *The Expansion of Rural Life.* Knopf, 1926, p. 228.
[20] *Ibid.,* p. 230.

Essentially the same procedure in dealing with the economic problem of the rural family is indicated in the following vivid illustration given by Dr. Butterfield:

> Here are two farmers on adjoining farms. One succeeds, the other fails. Why? Both are equally "helped." Both belong to the Grange, can receive the same agricultural bulletins from Washington and from the state experiment station, can attend the same extension school, belong to the same farm land bank, participate in the same farmers' exchange. What is the explanation? They are different men; that is all. Now unless you believe that *men* cannot be improved, then you must admit that the thing to do with the failure is not to give him more helps toward profit but to awaken him as a man. And you can best awaken him as a man only when you have touched the springs of character, have brought him to see his whole life in a new light. Perhaps he disregards the ordinary rules of hygiene, and loses days and weeks of labor and time. Perhaps he works so hard he hasn't time to think and no plans develop. Perhaps he just lacks the stimuli to thinking that come from neighborhood contacts.[21]

It is most significant that Dr. Williams and Dr. Butterfield, social psychologist and educator, after careful study and analysis of the problems of rural life, have both suggested a procedure which is in all essentials that of social case work. We find the following problem and procedure stated or implied in what they have said:

An individual or the members of a family are in difficulty—out of adjustment with people and with conditions.

The help of a "leader" is needed (a minister or teacher is suggested).

[21] K. L. Butterfield: *The Farmer and the New Day.* Macmillan, 1919, p. 67.

The "leader" should have the knowledge, the insight, and the ability to help the individual in trouble to understand his own attitudes and the conditions to which he must adjust himself; to help him gain insight into the point of view of others; to change his attitudes if necessary to make these adjustments. The "leader" should approach the adjustment of family problems from the point of view of the relation of the family to society.

Or, to paraphrase Dr. Butterfield:

A man can best be helped by one who recognizes that men are different, that they *can* be improved; who is able to awaken a man, to touch the springs of character, to help him see his whole life in a new light, and to make the necessary changes, perhaps within himself, in his habits and attitudes—perhaps changes in his relationship with his environment (neighborhood contacts).

This is, in effect, social case work: a method of assisting individuals to find for themselves a better way of life; or, as it has sometimes been called, "the art of helping people out of trouble."

Without question many ministers and teachers who have special knowledge, insight, and ability are already contributing in this way to the adjustment of rural family life. Such help is also constantly being given by country men and women of rare spirit and sympathetic understanding to friends and neighbors who are in trouble. The contribution of these people is invaluable and is usually an outgrowth of

the relationship which they already bear to the people whom they are helping.

Many of the essential and significant programs in the rural field have been developed as group activities. The work of the agricultural extension departments, the farm bureaus with their clubs and demonstrations, the co-operatives and similar farmers' organizations, community centers and clubs for social activities, other programs for recreation, the building of consolidated schools, of rural hospitals —all are concerned, and rightly so, with the needs of the whole community or of smaller groups within the community.

It is the task of the social case worker who reaches the individual and the family of which he is a member to strive to make these good things available to those families who might not otherwise profit by them; to show their value to people who might not otherwise be willing to use them; and to try to preserve the integrity of family life during this difficult period of adjustment to new conditions.

The social case work organization, therefore, may be that agency which, in the words of Dr. Williams, enables rural people "to understand their own attitudes and the new conditions to which they and their children must adjust themselves." And the social case worker may be recognized, with the minister and the teacher, as a "leader" who is especially equipped to take up the vital problem of the adjustment of the rural family.

II. SOCIAL CASE WORK IN THE RURAL PROGRAM

SOCIAL CASE WORK

SOCIAL case work is concerned with the problems of families and individuals who are in trouble because of sickness, death, unemployment, desertion, delinquency, disagreement between husband and wife, and other difficulties between members of the family or between individuals and the community. The case worker's aim is to preserve family life where it is threatened; to restore it where it has been broken; to find for people whose homes cannot be restored the best possible substitute for normal family life.

When the case worker is asked to help in the solution of these problems, she seeks to learn from the individuals concerned and from those who know them best, the factors in their own lives, in their family histories, and in their surroundings which have combined to make them the people they are and to bring them into the situations in which they find themselves.

Each person whom the social worker consults contributes his version of the existing problems and it

is her task to assemble all this evidence and to use her special skill in discerning the heart of the trouble and the strengths and weaknesses of the people involved. Building on this knowledge, and in consultation with the friends and relatives who are best able to advise, she endeavors to help the family and individuals to work out their own solutions.

To aid in meeting many special problems she may call upon the workers of other social and health agencies: the visiting teacher for the troublesome school child; the psychiatrist for serious mental conditions or personality or conduct problems; the public health nurse for health problems; the club leader or the playground director if recreation is needed. When such agencies do not exist in the community she encourages, and sometimes initiates, their organization, or finds the nearest substitute within the resources which are available.

The cultivation of independence of thought and action, the building of character, and the development of personality are her objectives. As a friend in time of need she wins the respect and confidence of the people who come to her for help and advice and her services in their behalf may continue for months or years. The same principles hold and the same method is of value in meeting the problems of families still practically untouched by recent changes in rural life—those who are more or less isolated, whose farming methods are those of their fathers, where no household conveniences relieve the drudg-

ery of the women and many of the children work beyond their strength and have little chance to play.

On such farms it is possible that much of the difficulty, as suggested by Dr. Butterfield, lies within the farmer himself—in his attitude toward his work—his habits—his health—his whole outlook on life. Perhaps he is ignorant of the helps to better farming; perhaps he does not belong to the Grange; has had no contact with the agricultural extension, nor with co-operatives. Or, if he has had these opportunities, he may be prejudiced against them with all that aversion to new things which is part of his rural heritage.

The service of the social case worker may here be three-fold: first, to help the farmer himself change his attitude, to overcome his prejudices—in effect, "to touch the springs of his character"; second, to help him secure information, make contacts, and find in the community the help which he needs, whether it is assistance in improving his methods of farming, more opportunity for social life and recreation, or the services of doctor, hospital, or nurse; and third, if these resources are lacking, if health facilities are inadequate, if the community offers little or nothing in the way of organization either for social purposes or for the promotion of better farming, the task of the social case worker is to find leaders and to stimulate them to study the needs of their own community and work toward the development of a sound community program.

Poverty and failure go hand in hand with drudgery, not only of the farmers themselves but of the women and children as well. Even if failure should gradually be turned into a small measure of success, the problem of overwork, particularly on the part of the women and children, may still remain. Here again the farmer's attitudes are involved. Habits of thrift and a deep-seated aversion to change stand in the way of the purchase of household conveniences. The tradition of work puts upon children a burden often beyond their strength. As the case worker helps the farmer to understand his own attitudes, to put new values upon the welfare of wife and children, as he and his family are brought into more frequent contact with progressive people and organizations, changes may gradually come in the family's way of life—changes which may bring to one more family that "better living on the farm" which is the objective of programs for rural development.

Social case work, dealing as it does with all types of problems affecting the individual, also lays the foundation for the ordered development of other forms of social work and of better health facilities. It is able to give pictures of existing conditions which may influence governmental agencies to provide better sanitary, housing, and working conditions; and it may have a far-reaching effect on provisions for better institutional care, both penal and custodial.

On what basis shall rural people work out a pro-

gram which shall satisfy rural needs? The answer to this question can only come as a result of continued study and experience, in which latent forces of rural life are released.

The auspices under which case work services are rendered vary from state to state and often from county to county within a state. Problems of organization, of finance, of scope and methods of work have been approached in many different ways. It is possible, however, to discuss some of these problems and to outline some of the different methods by which they have been met, as well as to draw certain conclusions which may have suggestive value for rural citizens and case workers who are directly concerned with the social problems of rural life.

Fundamental to this discussion is a recognition that rural social work must be developed by rural people in accordance with their own needs. Lindeman says, "Rural life can become socialized only through internal, indigenous, and creative processes from within." [1] The specialized and complicated organization of city social work can never be successfully transplanted to rural communities. Perhaps the outstanding problem which leaders in rural social work are facing at present is that of freeing the "creative processes" of socialization within the rural community in such a way that the peculiarly urban

[1] E. C. Lindeman: "The Relation Between Urban and Rural Social Work." *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work, 1924, p. 39.

characteristics of social work may be avoided and only those essentials used which may be truly assimilated.

The general objective is clear—to build a program which will bring "better living" to country people and achieve for a rural community the greatest good within the resources it can command. Resources have too often been counted in terms of financial support only. Far more valuable are the resources which lie in undiscovered leadership and in the participation of great numbers of country people in those "creative processes" of which Mr. Lindeman speaks.

The program for "better living" must in the last analysis be determined in each community after a careful weighing of needs as against resources. And it is important that full consideration be given to all areas of human needs—religious, educational, economic, health, and social.

FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The religious and educational needs of rural people have long been recognized. The fundamental importance of the rural church and of better schools for rural children is unquestioned.

More recently agricultural extension work, on behalf of better farming, with its county agents and its boys' and girls' clubs, and the development of co-operatives and similar farm organizations have

been accepted as essential in meeting the economic problems of farm life.

The death rate among farm people, particularly children, the lack of control of communicable diseases, the decrease in the number of country doctors, scarcity and inaccessibility of hospitals and, above all, inadequate knowledge of the principles of public health and sanitation are increasingly challenging attention, and the development of facilities with which to meet health needs is gradually being accepted as a necessary part of the rural program.

The importance of social and family problems and the contribution which social case work may make to their solution have already been discussed. Other forms of social work which deal with groups rather than with individuals—community organizations, club and recreation programs with their significant contributions—have also made a place for themselves in rural communities.

Professional Service. In all these fields, skilled aid and professional service are needed. It is undoubtedly true that the average county will not support a number of full-time social workers. The problem before county leaders today is to determine in relation to community resources just how many skilled workers are essential to their objective, what activities should be emphasized, and how these activities should be developed and correlated.

Inter-dependence of Programs. Dr. Butterfield has shown the plight of the unsuccessful farmer who

has access to helps to better farming but who is evidently unable or unwilling to use them. It is the task of the social case worker "to awaken him as a man," to touch "the springs of character," to help him to the "neighborhood contacts" which will stimulate his thinking,[2] and, in so doing, to help him realize among other things the value of scientific methods of farming and the importance of taking care of his health.

With such a change in his attitude, the farmer will be ready to take advantage of every available source of information and to put forth his best efforts to improve his methods of farming. But he will be on unfamiliar ground. How will he adapt this new information to the special conditions on his own farm? Perhaps his poor health is due to unsanitary conditions in his home, to poorly prepared food or faulty diet; perhaps tuberculosis is the cause of his losing days and weeks of labor and time. His change of attitude may then be of little avail unless he is able to turn to an agricultural agent for specific advice on the management of his farm, to a nurse for definite instructions and aid in restoring his health, and to a home demonstration agent for the assistance which she can give to his wife in the management of their home. And of what avail would the services of either agricultural or home demonstration agent be to a family so prejudiced that they are unwilling to use them? And what value

[2] See quotation, p. 17.

would the advice of the agricultural agent have for a farmer who is too ill to act upon it?

Needs for services offered by county agent, nurse, and social worker are not limited to those outlined by Dr. Butterfield. They are repeated in infinite variation—and with infinite possibilities for co-operative effort—throughout the average rural community. A well rounded program would therefore seem to require at least one full-time worker in each of these three fields. If this is not possible a beginning should be made in the field in which careful study reveals the most acute problems.

APPROACHES TO A SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

We already see social work programs in action in rural counties—some developed from the community organization and others from the social case work approach. Community organization, as its name implies, approaches the social problems of the community through groups, through the mobilization and correlation of forces already at work, and through the development of new organizations as the need appears. Such a program may well include provision for recreational needs and club work of various kinds. And its activities may reveal the need of social case work. The approach of social case work, on the other hand, is through the individual and the family to the development of a community-wide program which will meet the needs of these individuals. Whether the case work approach

is made under the auspices of a group of private citizens, of public officials, of the school, or of the court, the objective is the same.

So closely related are these two approaches that it is important that the rural social worker be trained in both community organization and social case work. If the needs of the county point to the community approach the social worker, though a leader in community organization, may later be able, as need arises, to devote considerable time to work with individuals, continuing to advise with local leaders on organization questions and shifting to them the major responsibility for this community program. If a social case worker has had training in community organization, she is better prepared to see the community program as a whole and to advise in regard to the development of those facilities which will secure "better living" for the numerous families whose needs have been vividly revealed in the course of her day-to-day work. The social case worker, through her knowledge of the problems affecting the lives of the men, women, and children who come to her for help, and through her visits to their homes in every part of the county, has an unparalleled opportunity to discern the strengths and weaknesses of the community program and to measure the extent to which it promotes the welfare of individuals. Her case work reveals community needs by the accumulation of convincing data—such as the number of cases of illness, perhaps of tuberculosis

alone, which puts in concrete terms the hitherto vaguely realized need of better provision for hospital or sanatorium care or even a full public health program; definite instances of juvenile delinquency in one neighborhood, which point with the same vividness to the need for a recreation program or club work; the effects of extreme isolation upon families in certain sections of the county where opportunities for more social contacts are badly needed. The community responsibility of the social case worker lies not only in assembling such definite information but in bringing it to the attention of strategic groups in the county, and in considering with them the relation of each new development to the program as a whole.

Whether a county may deal more effectively with its social problems through an initial program of community organization or of social case work would seem to depend in the last analysis upon conditions within the county. Whichever approach is decided upon it may well lead to the development of the other program, particularly if the social worker employed at the start has had preparation in both forms of work.

Public Health and Social Work. In many counties which have no public health or social work programs, agricultural and home demonstration agents are already employed. These counties have perhaps become conscious of their health and social problems and, since to employ two additional full-time work-

ers has sometimes seemed impossible, they have considered the advisability of securing one person to do both forms of work. Two practical difficulties in this plan present themselves: First, it is almost impossible to find a worker with nurse's training and the special preparation required for public health work who has also had training in social work. Second, if such a worker can be secured, the demands made upon her by the double task are far too heavy to be met satisfactorily by any one person. In the average county the needs in either the public health or the social work field will tax to the utmost the capacity of one worker and, if the double responsibility is placed on the shoulders of one person, the probable result will be the limitation of her work to the care of the most pressing emergencies in both fields and consequent loss to the county of the significant contributions of both public health and social work.

It is, of course, possible that in the future the need felt by rural counties for this combined form of service and the increased participation of country people may stimulate a greater number of workers to take both kinds of training and make possible some adaptation of this plan in counties where the two programs cannot be developed separately. At present, however, leaders in rural social work strongly advise against such a combination of services.

Counties which cannot at first carry two programs

should discover where the greatest need lies and bend their energies in that direction. Experience has shown that the development of a program of either public health or social work not only reveals the need of the program not yet developed, but that it may lead to the discovery and utilization of hitherto unsuspected resources for its support. This outgrowth of one type of work as a result of activities in the other field has usually taken place under the leadership of a public health nurse who had a deep appreciation of the value of social work, or of a social worker who was equally aware of the value of a public health program. It is important, therefore, that the public health nurse be informed about social work and the possibilities of its contribution to rural life, if she is to be instrumental in bringing this service to her county. Likewise, the social worker should secure definite information in regard to public health work in rural communities, including the program of the state board of health, so that she may be prepared, at the earliest opportunity, to assist the county in which she is working to meet health needs.

In a few counties where the employment of both a nurse and a social worker seems out of the question, the suggestion has been made that two or more adjacent counties join forces in the employment of both. This plan obviates the difficulty of trying to secure a person who is prepared to do both public health and social work—but the problem presented

by an almost overwhelming volume of work still remains. Those who propose the plan hope that this difficulty may be overcome, to some extent at least, by increased participation of the citizens in each of these counties in actual day-to-day activities; and of course it is possible that, under certain conditions, in the more sparsely populated sections of the country, the work might not prove too overwhelming. Although it is unlikely that at first resources will be available for more than one worker, as the work proceeds it may be possible to plan for a more extensive program.

While frequently the approach to rural social problems has been made through the school or the juvenile court, through case work with children, or through the adjustment of family problems, in actual practice the social case worker who has had special preparation in one or more of these fields gradually widens the scope of her work into what may be called a general case work program.

III. FIRST STEPS IN ORGANIZING FOR CASE WORK

INTERESTING COUNTY LEADERS IN SOCIAL CASE WORK

IN a county or rural community which has no case work organization, the attention of thoughtful, socially minded people may be challenged in various ways. Perhaps an especially distressing situation in the neighborhood—children deserted by their parents, or the plight of an unmarried girl in her teens who is pregnant—calls for a type of service which the neighborly resources of the community cannot supply. Some special occurrence may bring home forcibly the value of the social case work being done in a nearby community. A vivid presentation of case work on the program of a state meeting of county officials, of women's clubs, or other groups, may stimulate thinking about local problems.

Only a few people in the county, possibly not more than one or two, may be sincerely convinced of the need to take action. But if these few have vision, determination, and courage, they may become leaders in a movement of great value to the whole community. Such a group may organize a committee or

decide to work in a less formal way. The work of ten or fifteen people whose interest is aroused to white heat will be far more effective at this point than that of a larger number whose concern may be less vital.[1]

The community leaders themselves will know best who should be asked to share responsibility in arousing the interest of others and how to convince them of the need for action. Among the first to be approached will undoubtedly be those men and women to whom the people in their own neighborhoods naturally turn in time of trouble. Different interests and different sections of the community—whether a county or smaller unit—should be represented to avoid any factional disputes and jealousies which unfortunately may exist in rural communities as they do elsewhere.

If there has been no previous contact with a state department of welfare it is important that the group learn by reference to state laws or by consultation with state or county officials whether such a department of welfare does exist in the state. If so, the first step should be to consult with the department either by letter or by personal visit. Many state departments employ social workers who have had practical experience in rural communities. Through their state-wide contacts they have first-hand knowledge of the methods by which other rural counties

[1] See also Francis H. McLean: *Organizing Family Social Work in Smaller Cities.* Family Welfare Association of America, 1932, pp. 11-15.

in the same state are meeting social problems. This knowledge and experience they are prepared to place at the disposal of rural leaders who may thus be able to adapt to the special conditions in their own community a program planned for the needs of their own state and already tried out and approved by people living under similar economic and social conditions.

The organizing committee will wish to work in the closest co-operation with whatever state advisory group is available. The department of public welfare of a neighboring state may be able to supply information about their county programs which would be particularly helpful if it is in the same agricultural area and other rural conditions are similar.[2]

CONCRETE INFORMATION ABOUT CONDITIONS

The committee will also wish to secure definite information about the social problems within the county to use as a basis for decision as to the type of program most needed and for educational purposes. In seeking this information the committee might well have in mind some such questions as the following:

[2] The Federal Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, has assembled and published descriptions of the methods of county-wide work for the care and protection of children in a number of states (see bibliography, page 160). Information may also be secured from national agencies (see list, page 156) which are often in touch with work in rural counties in widely different parts of the country. The Federal Children's Bureau will also send, on request, a list of state departments of public welfare.

Problems of Family Life

Are numbers of young people who seem well fitted for farm life leaving home for the city? Is this merely a normal migration? If not:

What appear to be the reasons for it? Unpleasant family relationships? Discouragement over farming conditions?

Are there instances of family strain which seem to be due to lack of adjustment to changing rural conditions?

Are there many farms where the lack of household conveniences puts an excessive burden on the women and girls?

Does the lack of conveniences appear to be due to poverty? To indifference on the part of the farmer? To prejudice? To ignorance?

Are the unsuccessful farmers taking full advantage of the services of county agents and other helps to better farming?

If not, is their failure to do this due to ignorance? To ultra-conservatism?

Do children work on their home farms to the detriment of their health? Their schooling? Are they thereby deprived of opportunity for some recreation?

Juvenile Delinquency [3]

What provision is made by state law for juvenile court hearings in rural counties?

Has the county taken full advantage of this law?

How many children were brought into court during the last year? For what reasons? By whom?

Are the hearings private?

Has the judge any way of securing information about a child's family and home conditions, except through the court hearing?

Has the judge the help of a woman with the girls who are brought into court?

Are physical and mental examinations of the children made?

Where are the children kept pending trial?

What disposition was made of these children? Dismissed? Sent to institutions? Other disposition?

Does it appear that a number of children sent to institutions

[3] Special sources of information: the judge of the court in which children's cases are heard, the county attorney, and justices of the peace.

might have been allowed to stay in their own homes or in other carefully selected homes if there had been in the county a social case worker under whose supervision the court could have placed them?

Do teachers know of difficult children who need special attention if they are to be kept out of court?

Have there been recent instances of the neglect or abuse of children? What steps were taken to protect these children and better their condition?

Children Born Out of Wedlock [4]

How many illegitimate children were born in the county during the past year? How old were the mothers?

What has happened to these children? Are they with their mothers? With relatives? Placed in institutions? Given away by the mothers for adoption?

What has happened to the mothers of these children? Are they at home? Working out? Have some of them been forced by their families or by the community attitude to leave home? To leave the county?

Have women in the county been able to help some of these mothers with their difficult problems?

In how many instances did the fathers of these children acknowledge paternity? How many of the fathers assumed some responsibility for the support of their children?

Child Labor [5]

Are numbers of children in the county engaged in agricultural labor? On truck farms? On fruit farms? In tobacco or cotton raising? Or other occupations?

Is this work detrimental to their health? Does it interfere with schooling? What chances do they have for play?

Do the children belong to migratory families or are they residents of the county?

Dependency [6]

How many families were assisted during the past year from public funds? What was the total amount spent?

[4] Special sources of information: birth records, doctors, hospitals, court officials.

[5] Special sources of information: the county agents.

[6] Special sources of information: county officials, county records,

What (approximately) was the average amount given monthly to the families who received assistance regularly?

Who is responsible for giving this assistance? County commissioners (supervisors, county court)? Township officials? Superintendent of the poor?

Were visits made to the homes of the families who asked for help? Is any effort made to discover the causes of their need, as for instance, illness, desertion, lack of employment, and to assist them to some solution of their difficulties?

What church societies and other organizations are giving material relief to a number of families? Is it possible to estimate the amount spent in this way during the past year?

Are these organizations helping a number of the same families who are receiving assistance from the county funds? Are these organizations accustomed to confer with the county officials in regard to the needs of these families?

Do a number of the same families receive help from either source year after year? Does it appear that their condition is improved or not? Are they becoming more dependent? Have they started to beg?

Aid To Mothers With Dependent Children

Is there a state law providing for aid to mothers with dependent children (mothers' pensions)? If so, what are its terms?

Is the law operative in the county? How much money was spent under this act during the past year? How is the fund administered? By the court? By the commissioners?

Are visits made to the homes of the mothers? Is careful consideration given to all the factors which have a bearing upon the welfare of the mothers and children, both before and after the allowance is granted?

Child Placement and Adoption [7]

How many children in the county have been adopted this last year?

church societies and other organizations which give relief, especially Parent-Teacher Associations which give clothing to school children.

[7] These questions are taken from a leaflet, *Know Your County Child Welfare Situation,* published by the Children's Code Committee of the Wisconsin Conference of Social Work.

How many children were placed in foster homes during this period?

Was this placing done by courts? Parents? Licensed home-finding agencies? Doctors?

Were the children in good health at the time of placement? (Was there insanity, feeblemindedness, syphilis, or tuberculosis in the families? In the case of illegitimate children, had paternity been established so that the physical and mental inheritance was fully known?)

Were the homes carefully investigated before and after placement to see whether the child would have healthful surroundings? Educational opportunities? Loving and sympathetic care? A share in the social, recreational, and religious life of the community? A home suited to the child's particular temperament?

Why did these children have to be separated from their relatives? Could this separation have been avoided?

Is it fair to a child under 16 to place him in a home to work for room, board, and schooling?

Could better homes have been found for these children?

The Physically and Mentally Handicapped [8]

Are there in the county adults and children who are crippled or otherwise physically handicapped (blind, deaf, and so on) and who are not receiving suitable medical care, general education, or vocational training? Do they or their parents know how to take advantage of local and state facilities for care and training?

What provision is made for the care of the feebleminded? Are they sent to a state institution? If they remain in or are returned to their homes, is any provision made for their continued training and supervision?

It will not be necessary, and probably will not be practicable, within the time at the disposal of the committee, to secure exhaustive information in answer to all the questions listed. It is important, however, to be assured of the authenticity of whatever

[8] Special sources of information: courts, schools, doctors, hospitals.

information is obtained. In addition to the special sources of information suggested in the footnotes the committee will get particularly helpful material from such sources as the following: teachers who have been known to take a special interest in the home conditions of children under their care; pastors who have become the "intimate and far-seeing friends" of the families in their congregations; the agricultural and home demonstration agents who have drawn into their clubs and classes the men and women from the more isolated farms. The questions do, however, suggest the direction which the inquiries may take and changes and additions should be made as need arises.

In assembling the data the committee should compile it in such form that it can be easily referred to. An abundance of specific illustrations of actual conditions will be particularly helpful.

Information in Regard to Resources. The inquiry in regard to social problems will at the same time reveal existing resources and community-minded individuals and organizations. For example, the work of the juvenile court, of the superintendent of schools, of teachers will be revealed; the facilities for the administration of mothers' pensions and poor relief; the activities of churches; and other forces at work in the county.

The special interests of each of these groups and any particular problems which have aroused their concern may be noted.

THE PLACE OF SOCIAL CASE WORK IN THE COUNTY PROGRAM

The committee may, of course, decide that some form of public health work should precede a case work program. On the other hand, it may be convinced that social case work will reveal the need for and stimulate effective interest in health work, as would be the case in a county where concern over social problems and immediate prospect of support for a case work program is considerably greater than the evident interest in health problems.

Three definite possibilities suggest themselves for consideration by the committee if the information gathered in its inquiry points to the need of social case work:

(1) The addition of social case work to the activities of a public department[9] already existing. This would involve convincing the board or public officials of a real need, and also an interpretation of the need for social case work to influential citizens who will aid in convincing the board.

(2) The organization of a private agency. Some Red Cross chapters have undertaken civilian relief (case work service to all families in the community). An independent private agency, supported by funds raised by subscription, may be called a family social work agency, a social service bureau, or simi-

[9] Board of county commissioners, county board of supervisors, township officials, superintendent of the poor.

lar name, under the direction of a board of directors representing the community as a whole.

(3) The combination of a public and private agency. There are many of these in rural counties. The support comes partly from tax funds, partly from private subscriptions, and the directing board is drawn from the group responsible for administering the public funds and from the citizenry at large.

The strength of existing resources, revealed by the committee's study, as well as the extent and kind of need, will be determining factors in selecting one or another of the three auspices described above. The origin of the desire for case work, the interest of various groups, and available financial resources will also have considerable influence. A state or national agency might well be drawn into the committee's counsels to help evaluate the possibilities of the different types of auspices as related to local conditions.[10]

If the state law defines and requires the establishment of a county welfare unit, the information obtained as a result of the suggested study will prove valuable in showing public officials and the general public the need for the program. If there is a state law permitting but not requiring a county welfare unit, the material gathered will be useful not only for educational purposes, but as perhaps indicating the need of another type of activity, such as a health program, which should precede the adoption of the

[10] For list of national agencies see page 156.

county welfare unit. Where there is no law defining the form and scope of a local welfare program, the committee's study may be the basis of determining the type of activity most needed in the community, its relationship to the rest of the county program, and possible sources of support and participation.

In many counties having a public agency, especially where the form of organization is defined by state law, welfare boards have been appointed and given full responsibility similar to that carried by the board of education. Such boards or committees are partly or entirely made up of lay people and are in a strategic position, because of their close contact with the work and their standing in the community, to sponsor a social work program with the officials and interpret it to the general public.

Public officials are responsible to the community for the expenditure of county money and naturally have regard for public opinion, particularly when it finds expression through the reaction of influential citizens. Progressive officials who are themselves convinced of the value of case work may find it necessary to give way before the adverse criticism and opposition of an uninformed and prejudiced public. Therefore, the extent to which the committee has been able to educate public opinion and to interpret the work may be taken as a measure of the stability and strength of the program.

The Public Agency. When the time comes to take definite action in regard to the inauguration of

a public agency, if that is decided upon, the county commissioners will doubtless be glad to have the committee of citizens who have been interesting themselves in the matter appear formally at a regular meeting and make a request that such action be taken. This occasion will give those officials who may not have had much opportunity to learn of the purposes and value of the proposed venture a chance to ask questions and hear from the committee of the interest already aroused in the county. As part of the preparation for this meeting the committee will find it most helpful to draw up a brief statement, outlining the purpose of the agency, describing the type of work to be done, requesting the employment of a social case worker who has had suitable preparation for the position, and asking for the necessary office space, clerical help, and equipment.[11] In this connection the committee may present to the county board for their information a tentative budget.

The Private Society. A private society may be the logical development in the unusual rural county which plans later to have a socialized public department as well. In this case the society might hope to demonstrate to the public and to the officials the value of a socialized public agency by administering the poor fund, at the request of the county board (or court), until the public agency is established.

[11] Invaluable in this connection is *The Organization and Administration of Public Relief Agencies,* by Rose Porter. Family Welfare Association of America, 1931.

A demonstration of this kind will offer greater possibilities of success in counties where the public relief is not administered in accordance with a system already rigidly set along the lines of the English Poor Law, into which it is difficult to inject newer conceptions.

The private society would, if necessary, continue to assist the public officials and the citizens advisory to or responsible for administration of public funds, in educating public opinion to want a high standard of case work in the public agency. It is possible that after a socialized public department is established the private agency may find it advisable to retire from the field, leaving the entire responsibility to the public agency.

Organization of a Private or "Combination Plan" Society. In preparing for the organization of a private or combination public and private agency, the committee will find it helpful to present a form of organization, a tentative budget, and plans for financial support, as a means of placing definite information before individuals whose interest and support are sought, and for the use of those who are asked later to serve on the board. It is important that this statement also include a careful explanation of the fact that the new organization need not take the place, or take over the work, of any existing agency, but will seek to place its services at the disposal of all in the county who are concerned in the solution of social problems.

Publicity. If the committee has decided on launching a new private agency or a combination of public and private, it should work toward a public meeting which would bring together citizens representative of all community interests.

Preparation for the public meeting should include extensive publicity and securing the consent of ten or twelve carefully chosen people to serve on the board as an organizing committee. The information gathered regarding the social problems in the county will provide the most important part of the publicity material. Material of a more general nature may be secured from the state department of public welfare or from a national agency.

General interest may be aroused through newspaper articles and talks made before clubs and societies throughout the county, but the most effective method of securing definite and lasting interest will undoubtedly prove to be the approach made to individuals by members of the committee and those who are working with them.

Organization Meeting. The program of the organization meeting would include an explanation of the purpose for which it has been called, an opportunity for questions and discussion of the proposed plan, and the appointment of an organizing committee, with authorization to appoint a board of directors and take whatever steps are necessary to set up an organization.

The Budget. A tentative budget should be prepared and presented, covering at least the following:[12]

Salaries of social case worker and office assistant
Office and upkeep
Equipment
Stationery, printing, and supplies
Postage, telephone, and telegraph
Transportation
Material relief
Miscellaneous:
- Conferences—state and national
- Treasurer's bond
- Auditing of books
- Compensation insurance for staff
- Books and periodicals

[12] See also Chapter IV, page 58, and Chapter VII.

IV. SETTING UP THE AGENCY

THE organizing committee (and later the board of directors) charged with the development of the case work program must give consideration to membership in the organization and to the size and selection of the board.

MEMBERSHIP

The private, or the joint public and private agency, may well make full use of the value of membership in the sense of belonging. Membership in the agency may be open to every person who contributes to its support or shares actively in its work and, in its most desirable form, is founded on live interest and active participation. Ideally, members should be kept in close touch with the activities of the agency through committee work and participation in the responsibilities of case work, as well as through frequent meetings to determine general policies. In actual practice, the membership may be so large and so widely scattered that the members can conveniently be called together only once a year to hear and approve reports of the work and elect the board of directors.

In a sense every tax-payer belongs to the public

agency, but the relationship is usually vague unless adverse criticism and real opposition arise. It is possible that a special form of membership, created on the basis of interest and participation, might bring to the public agency the same values which it holds for the private agency. The members would have no voice in determining policies (except possibly in an advisory capacity), nor part in selecting the board or committee, but would furnish a valuable channel for the education of public opinion.[1]

THE BOARD

The board of a public agency is usually small, with perhaps five or seven members, usually with a definite legal status. Some public agencies prefer an informal advisory committee with no supervisory or control power and this may be somewhat larger.[2] In states where the board is required and defined by statute, a few of its members may serve ex-officio, the rest being chosen from among the citizens in the county. All the members of the board of county commissioners (or county supervisors, county court) or representatives chosen by them from their number would be ex-officio members of the board of a joint public and private agency.

[1] A discussion of membership as applied to family case work agencies in general is to be found in Francis H. McLean: *The Family Society.* Family Welfare Association of America, New York, pp. 5-11.

[2] See Rose Porter: *The Organization and Administration of Public Relief Agencies.* Family Welfare Association of America, pp. 8-9.

There are several factors which must be considered in the selection of the members at large for the board and advisory committee of the public agency as well as for the board of the private:

It is important that a board be representative of all sections of the county; that the members be progressive, socially-minded men and women, who have the confidence and respect of their own communities and who have become convinced of the need of social case work as part of the community program; that they be willing to give time and thought to the many problems which the organization will face; and that they be people who will work well together in the development of the program for the best interests of the whole community.

The board employs the social case worker who acts as its executive secretary, and the relationship between board and executive should be essentially one of partnership, in which the executive is what might be called the managing partner.

A board is the continuing stream of the life of a society. It is not—or should not be—dependent upon the presence of one, two, or three persons. Executives change, members of the professional staff move on to other tasks; but the board continues in the eyes of the public as trustees for the work, for the care of families. It is the visible sign of the community's endorsement of a project. The board stands sponsor for the work and without its sponsorship no society has a warrant for existence. If only for its moral trusteeship, a board is most important.[3]

[3] Francis H. McLean: *The Family Society.* Family Welfare Association of America, p. 12. For further discussion of the functions of a board and its relationship to executives, see pp. 12-31.

In order to represent satisfactorily all sections of the average county, the board of a private agency may need to have twenty or thirty members. If the difficulties of distance from the place of meeting and of bad roads in winter or during the rainy season do not prevent a fair average attendance at monthly meetings, a board of this size is to be recommended.

It is most important that the board keep in touch with the work and give the social worker the benefit of its thinking and the backing of its decisions as to policies to be adopted on questions constantly arising in the course of the day-to-day work. If, therefore, monthly meetings of the large board do not seem practicable, it may be best to plan for a smaller board, of perhaps fifteen members. This board would still represent the most important sections of the county, but people should be selected for it who live in places of fairly easy access to the place of meeting. The sections or communities of the county not represented on such a board could later be brought in touch with the work as the social worker is able to assist people in the different communities. Perhaps local committees may gradually be organized to advise and work with her on difficult family or community problems.

Selection of Board Members. Care should be taken, however, to avoid the danger of actually, or apparently, limiting to the county seat the interest and activity of the organization. Since the office of

the society will probably have to be at the county seat, expediency will undoubtedly dictate the selection of a majority of the members of the board from this town or the immediate vicinity. The danger referred to, however, may be guarded against if the members chosen are well known throughout the county, especially if several of them have been identified with activities and interests outside the county seat.

Shall board members be chosen because they are in themselves strong people, or because they represent other organizations? Or shall both classifications be included? If representatives are chosen shall they be elected formally by their organizations; or shall there be informal representation, a selection from each of the more important organizations of a member who, because of his value as an individual, will be an asset to the board of the case work agency? Shall organizations operating on a county-wide basis be given precedence? Shall clubs and societies in the various towns, particularly in the county seat, be included?

There are several reasons for believing that a sound principle in selecting board members is to consider first what they are in themselves and to look upon what they represent in the community as of secondary importance. In general, it is entirely probable that, if organizations are merely asked to elect representatives to serve on the board of another agency, they will be inclined to choose either

a somewhat ineffectual member who is willing to assume an extra responsibility or their most important member, the president perhaps, who is so busy that he contributes little more than his good will. The busy person will naturally answer first the demands of his own organization and may not be available when the case work agency most needs his time and energy; or, if he happens to have been the founder of his organization, or has other reasons for feeling especially responsible for its welfare, he may begin to think that his pet project is being pushed into the background; or he may bring with him a hangover of partisan relationship and factional spirit.

In spite of the difficulties involved there have been fine results in some counties where formally elected representatives have felt that a definite responsibility is conferred by their position and have formed the practice of reporting vividly to their organizations on the activities of the case work agency. These reports have been of great help in interpreting and securing increased participation in the case work program and have added to the agency strength and standing in the county. The Director of the Bureau of Child Welfare of New Mexico, in commenting upon this question of representation, cites one of the counties in New Mexico as having "a board of directors of one representative from each of twenty organizations. This larger board was supposed to meet only once in three months, the

actual work to be carried on largely by an executive committee of seven members. In actual practice, the larger board has asked to meet with the executive committee each month so far in the development of this new project; there has been a good attendance at each board meeting."

Many of the advantages of a system of representation may be retained and at least some of the difficulties avoided if it is possible to guide the choice of delegates through conference with leaders in the various organizations before the selections are finally made.

In securing representation, whether formal or informal, it is logical to give precedence to other countywide organizations, such as the Farm Bureau, county council of Parent-Teachers' Associations, county federation of women's clubs, and so on. Local conditions will, of course, determine the inclusion of town organizations; probably important clubs and societies in the larger towns should be represented.

Where other organizations in the county employ executives or agents, there is often an inclination to put these workers on the board because of their more intimate knowledge of community problems. However, the important contribution which these executives have to make to the case work program can usually be rendered more effectively through membership in a council or committee to consider case work problems and related community needs.

Since the society in its countywide activities will not limit its service to people in any particular religion, it is desirable that the broad religious faiths —Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—be represented on the board. If there is a county ministerial association, it may have either formal or informal representation; so also may the county medical association and the county bar association.

SECURING FUNDS

Upon the organizing committee (and later upon the board) will rest the responsibility for securing funds to carry forward the program of the organization. Where deep concern is felt, a means for relieving that concern is likely to be found. Realization of the problem presented in schools by difficult or handicapped children may dispose the board of education to contribute. The county officials may have become alarmed at the steady increase in the amount of relief given to families in their homes and may think of the proposed case work program as a means of decreasing this expenditure. This attitude is justified by the experience of many—but not all—counties in which a case work program has been supported by county funds: it behooves the organizing committee, therefore, to encourage these officials to look further, to realize not only the possibilities which lie in the redistribution of the funds in accordance with the actual needs and best welfare of the recipients, but those in the larger

values resulting from services of prevention as well as of cure. From a purely business standpoint, county officials must consider that this prevention will eventually save the county money through gradually decreasing the number of adults and children brought into court or sent to custodial and penal institutions. The wider possibilities of the case work program also appeal of course to public-minded citizens and to organizations which are deeply concerned over instances of delinquency, neglect, and dependency of which they have direct knowledge.

In a town of four thousand, the county seat of a rural county, a group of prominent men were stirred to action by the recurrent spectacle presented by the children of a dependent family who dragged in the mud in front of their home the good clothing and bedding which had been given them. The social case worker who was later employed helped these citizens to discover a number of serious problems in the family, including venereal disease and mental disorder, and together they set to work to relieve these underlying troubles.

Relief to the poor is among the oldest functions of local government, and it is not one of which this government should be relieved. The county does and should spend money for its disadvantaged people. On the other hand, many private organizations and individuals are constantly spending money for relief which, if totaled, would amount to a generous sum. Plans for the support of the program should recognize these facts. Here is a definite assumption of responsibility on the part of government on the

one hand and of private citizens on the other, and neither should be ignored in the development of a well rounded program. In the long history of social work, forward steps in new forms of service have been taken by private societies which have been free to invest money contributed by a relatively small and intelligently interested constituency. In the expenditure of public funds, how far in advance of the understanding of the tax-paying public are officials justified in developing a constructive and preventive program? Is private support still necessary for those types of service which have not as yet the full support of public opinion? These are questions to ponder.

THE BUDGET

Salary of Case Worker and Assistant. The most important item in the budget of the proposed agency is the salary of the case worker. Since there is considerable fluctuation in salaries, it is best to consult on this point with the state department of welfare, or with the national agency in the field of case work from which the worker is to be chosen. The salaries of case workers in rural counties have ranged, in general, from $1,800 to $2,400 a year. Unless information to the contrary is secured from the sources suggested, the higher figure should be allowed if possible, as this will give greater assurance of securing a well qualified person.

Provision should be made for an office assistant

who will also do the stenographic work. This is a matter of business efficiency, of releasing the time of the case worker for the service to the people for which her skill and special preparation have equipped her. The demands of her work will take her to every part of the county and necessitate absences from the office for hours and frequently for an entire day at a time. During these absences, the office assistant must be on hand to interview people who come to the office, to answer the telephone and care for emergency calls. When the case worker is in the office, much of her time will be given to interviews with people who come there to talk over their problems with her, and the assistant can save her from interruption by attending to the numerous less important matters which demand attention. In addition to these services, the assistant will type the letters and records which are an essential part of the case work. This is in itself a time-consuming task and one which, if done by the case worker, would deprive the families whom she is striving to help of hours of her time. In other words, it is extravagant in the extreme to have a specially trained executive spend her time in the office, answering the telephone, typing case records and letters, and doing the numerous odd jobs that come up, in addition to her important real work.

The salary of the office assistant should be in accordance with the amount customarily paid in the community for comparable service. Sometimes a girl

who has finished college and taken a business course and who is interested in preparing herself for social work is available. It is advisable to defer the employment of the assistant until after the arrival of the social worker so that she may help in the selection of the person who is to be so closely associated with her.

Office Upkeep and Equipment. An office of at least two rooms is needed to insure privacy for the many interviews of a confidential nature. In many rural counties an office is provided in the court house or in the city hall of the county seat, but if such provision is not made, the cost of rent, heat, light, cleaning, and telephone should be included in the budget.

Necessary office equipment will include furniture, filing cases for letters and records, and a typewriter. The amount will vary in accordance with local prices, but probably an approximate figure of $500 should be allowed.

The use of a mimeographing machine in one of the county offices or schools is of the greatest help in getting out large numbers of letters or reports to the membership. High school pupils will sometimes do the work.

Other Operating Expenses. For stationery and printing (including records, office forms, annual reports, and educational material), approximately $300 will be needed; for postage, $100; for telephone calls and telegrams, $250. The case worker

will find it necessary to correspond with social agencies and officials in distant places who may be able to get in touch with the relatives and friends of families in the community and thereby assist in making suitable plans for their welfare. In an emergency a telephone call or a telegram, to a person outside or even within the county, often saves the organization additional expense by insuring a speedier and more effective service in a critical situation.

Transportation. If possible, an automobile and its necessary upkeep should be provided. Here, as in the case of the office assistant, the time of the case worker is involved. She must visit the homes of many families who live far from the railroad, bus, or car line. Livery and taxi hire quickly amount to a considerable item of expense and valuable time is lost if she must plan her work in accordance with train or bus schedules, or wait until officials or other workers who have the use of automobiles can take her to her destination. If, however, it seems impossible to include this item in the budget at the beginning, every effort should be made to provide an automobile as soon as possible after the work begins. Actual experience will quickly reveal the need.

The car may be the property of the worker, who receives mileage from county or society, or it may be the property of the agency. Sometimes garage service is contributed to the organization.

Material Relief. The amount allowed for material relief will vary with the form of organization and the provision which is made for the administration of the public relief fund. A private society which does not assume the administration of the public fund should allow $500 to $600 for this purpose and plan to secure additional amounts from interested churches, societies, and individuals as the work progresses. If administration of the public fund is assumed, or if a public agency or combination form of organization is planned, an initial sum of $300 to be secured from private sources, in addition to the public relief, will probably be sufficient.

Miscellaneous Items. These would probably not amount to over $500 and in some instances would be needed only the first year. (For list, see Chapter III, page 48.)

The budget for the first year includes of course the cost of new equipment. A slight allowance will have to be made in successive years for its upkeep.

SELECTION OF THE CASE WORKER

The next responsibility for the board is the selection of a worker. If the money for salaries is to be raised from private funds, the board should secure pledges for half or nearly half the amount needed for the first year before the case worker is employed.

The state department of public welfare or the national agency in the chosen case work field can

be helpful to the board in finding a case worker.[4] These organizations are prepared to make suggestions or to refer the board to others who may assist them and their advice will be needed in estimating the suitability of candidates who may apply directly to the board. People who have had no training in case work will probably apply, and the board will find it necessary to explain to them and to others in the county the reasons for wishing to employ a person who has had special preparation. The substance of this explanation may be found in the description already given of case work and its service in "mending human lives" and in revealing community needs. The social worker who is equipped to render this service must have behind her not only her own experience but the accumulated experience of many others who have dealt with similar problems. She must be "both a scientist and an artist whose material is human lives. This surely requires training, if any profession, whether teaching, medicine or law, requires it." In this connection the board may wish to refer to the following statement made by Dr. Butterfield, a prominent leader in the Country Life Movement and a thoughtful student of rural life:

There is need in the country as well as in the city for helpfulness to those not well circumstanced; the insane, the feeble-

[4] The Joint Vocational Service, 130 East 22d Street, New York, N. Y., has names of qualified workers which they are glad to suggest to inquirers. See also the list of national agencies, page 156.

minded, the poor, the sick, the unfortunate. We can organize better than we have thus far the spirit of helpfulness. It is not enough that we have the neighborly interest; we must also have the skilled aid.[5]

The qualifications and preparation for a position in a rural county are discussed in the following chapter. It will probably not be humanly possible, however, to find a worker who has all the qualifications mentioned or all the special preparation suggested.

Before the final decision is made it is desirable that the board meet the social worker who appears best qualified for the position. This is important from the standpoint of both board and social worker. It will make possible the discussion of many questions which cannot be dealt with satisfactorily by letter and will give the board an opportunity to decide whether or not the personality of the social worker is one which will fit in.

Preparation for Her Coming. There are many ways in which the members of the board may prepare for the coming of the social worker. If possible, they should make plans for the work to start at the beginning of the season of the year when the roads are at their best, as this will greatly simplify the process of becoming acquainted with the county and getting the work well in hand before the snow or heavy rains make access to parts of the county difficult or impossible. If the social

[5] K. L. Butterfield: *The Farmer and the New Day.* Macmillan, 1919, p. 48.

worker is to administer the poor relief it is important that provision be made for the gradual assumption of this responsibility. The board may discuss these plans in general with the social worker in advance and arrange the details after the work begins.

In telling people throughout the county of the part which the social worker will play in the new program, members of the board should avoid giving the impression that her coming will mean the immediate solution of social problems.

> The coming of the social worker does not blazon the millennium. It does help to focus the social problems of the county so that all may see them more clearly. It integrates the social effort of all groups in the county, and usually accomplishes certain definite gains.[6]

Instead, it should be emphasized that the social worker comes to work in partnership with the people in the county who are already engaged in dealing with their social problems—to share their responsibility, not to relieve them of it. Sometimes the coming of a social worker has been the occasion for certain organizations turning over to her at once whole lists of families with whom they have been working. The board may guard against anything of this sort by explaining that the social worker's service will be given most effectively when she meets with these organizations regarding any problems about which they may wish to consult her.

[6] Louise Cottrell: "Social Problems and Social Resources of the Small Community." *The Family,* March, 1925, p. 18.

Often a case worker is asked to do considerable public speaking when she first comes into a county. This puts her under a heavy strain as she is striving to get her work well in hand, and if possible the board should relieve her of this additional responsibility for the first few months at least. As the work develops, she will wish to take advantage of every opportunity, but it is important that board members and others who are in close touch with the work continue to help in interpretation. Nothing carries greater weight with a group of citizens than public endorsement by another citizen in whose judgment the group has confidence.

As the time for the arrival of the social worker approaches, one of the women on the board may offer to assist her in finding a place to live. Other plans will suggest themselves to help the newcomer feel at home and to make her first days in the community particularly pleasant.

V. THE SOCIAL WORKER

QUALIFICATIONS

MANY of the social workers who may be available for the position in the agency will be young women who have always lived in a city and who have received their preparation for social work in a city organization. When a social worker whose background is wholly urban is employed in a rural county, certain adjustments must be made by her on the one hand and by the county people on the other if the two are to work together effectively. These adjustments are necessary not because of any inherent differences between urban and rural people, but because the widely different conditions under which they live have inevitably influenced their methods of thought and action. While it must be admitted that in a number of instances such adjustments have been found difficult and sometimes impossible, there is also abundant evidence of the wholehearted acceptance by country people of social workers who have had no previous experience with rural life, and of mutual understanding and adaptability which have made it possible for them to work together in the finest kind of partnership. Such satis-

factory results have been due to the ability and willingness of the social workers to adjust themselves to ways and conditions of living which are new and unaccustomed to them, and to the efforts of country people who have made this adjustment easier by their understanding and sympathy. Ability to adjust to new conditions may, therefore, be considered an essential qualification in a social worker who is to come into a rural community with no previous experience of rural life.

There are many social workers in city organizations who have come originally from rural communities. Some of them are available for positions in rural counties; others may not know of such opportunities or may have decided for various reasons to remain in city work. There is no question but that these workers have a distinct contribution to make to the development of rural programs.

It is not desirable, even if it were possible, to limit the contribution of social workers with rural background to rural communities, nor that of city-bred workers to cities. Each group has an important contribution to make to the other, and this fact should be taken into account if a social worker with city background is being considered for the position.

The qualifications required for social case work are fundamentally the same whether the work is to be done in a city or in a rural community. The case worker should have an outgoing personality, insight, and vision. She should be resourceful, sensi-

tive to people and situations, and able to adapt herself to them. She should have good judgment, common sense, patience, and a sense of humor, as well as sound physical health.

There are factors in rural work which point to the need for special emphasis on some if not all of these qualifications. The rural case worker must usually carry executive responsibility. She is sometimes the first and often the only social worker in the county. Her contact with people in a rural community is much closer than it is in a city. The people among whom she works will seek first to know her as a person and unless they accept her they will probably not accept the work she stands for, no matter how well qualified she is professionally.

For these reasons not only the highest type of training but the most exacting personal qualifications are desirable for rural work. It presents the difficulties and also the challenge of a pioneer field. The opportunities it offers for work in partnership with rural people of insight and vision are such as to appeal strongly to social workers of the highest caliber.

Love of the country for its own sake is perhaps the most important of all qualifications.

The rural social worker should be a friendly person, willing to drop all formality; able to identify herself with the people with whom she works, and to become a part of the community in which she lives. This involves freedom from prejudice, the

ability to make constant adjustments and the willingness to modify her personal habits to conform with local standards. If she is self-reliant, she will be better able to put up with the inevitable loneliness which results from separation from others who have the same professional interests.

Case work in the average rural county must be done without the help of specialized social agencies and other resources which are usually available in a city. The rural worker, therefore, should have initiative and ingenuity in developing resources, and in recognizing and using whatever facilities may be at hand.

If she is to work in a satisfactory partnership with the people in the county she should be willing to efface herself and to let others take credit for accomplishments in which she has had a share.

Since she must deal directly with all types of human problems and will not have older and more experienced social workers to share her responsibilities, it is important that she have sufficient maturity to command confidence, both in her general community contacts and in case work.

Executive ability of a high order, good judgment, and vision are essential if she is to assume a position of leadership in the community program. She must be able to see clearly the inter-relationship and relative importance of varied community problems. She should be able to look far ahead to possibilities in the development of the community program and at

the same time be willing to go slowly in suggesting new plans.

Experience with rural life is of undoubted value. This background, however, has been found unnecessary by workers of special adaptability and imaginative powers who have made up for the lack by study, reading, and observation.

Rural social workers may well apply to themselves the standard which has been set for the rural teacher in the following vivid description:

> A mature man or woman, well grounded in the fundamentals of elementary and secondary education, and with the additional equipment provided by two, three, or better, four years of a broadly conceived specialized education pointed directly toward this important job; fired with a love of country life, familiar with its problems; competent to the difficult task of making the rich environment that lies all about the school yield up its valuable lessons; competent as well to open to the country child the world that lies beyond his horizon; living in the community as part of it; perhaps as its very soul and center; proud of his profession but humble with a sense of its responsibilities; ambitious not to attain "promotion" in the current meaning of that term, but finely ambitious to grow in a work in which the possibilities of growth have no limit.[1]

Training. At present courses in Rural Community Organization, Rural Social Problems, and Rural Institutions are being given in many agricultural colleges. A few professional schools are offering limited facilities for training for the rural case work field.

The following professional qualifications are suggested as desirable:

[1] W. C. Bagley: "National Responsibilities for the Improvement of Rural Education." *Proceedings,* Fifth National Country Life Conference, Association Press, 1922, p. 42.

First: Two years as a graduate student in a school of social work.

Second: One or two years' experience with both executive and case work problems, under the supervision of an experienced social case worker, in a rural community. Special attention to be given to the interpretation of case work to the community and to factors which bear upon the development of the community program. Courses at a College of Agriculture in Rural Sociology, Farm Management, and (optional) in practical farming methods. The last is advisable if the student has had no direct experience with rural life.

If the supervised experience in a rural county is out of the question, one or two years in a small city organization is suggested as affording an opportunity to work in a community in which many of the factors are present that condition village life.

A total of three years of actual experience is a minimum requirement, and a longer period is much to be preferred. The Director of the New Mexico Bureau of Child Welfare writes:

> For the executive secretary of a unit of social work in a small community, we feel that at least five years' experience is a necessity. Less mature, less experienced workers are not capable of handling with poise and confidence the community as well as case problems presented, and are not able to make decisions where there is no opportunity for consultation with a supervisor. It seems to us that unusually well qualified workers are more essential here than in city agencies where the supervision is easier.

Self-Preparation. As a substitute for training under rural conditions workers may discover for themselves many ways of gaining an understanding of rural life. The following suggestions indicate lines of inquiry and sources of information:

(1) Reading: On rural sociology;[2] rural com-

[2] See Gertrude Vaile: "The Contribution of Rural Sociology to Family Social Work." *The Family,* June, 1933.

munity organization; rural life; agricultural conditions in the section of the country in which the work is to be done, including marketing, farm management, tenantry, animal husbandry, crops. Codes of state laws on health, protection of children, labor, education, and so on should be secured and a farm paper should be subscribed to.[3]

(2) Visits to friends living in villages or in the open country. Conferences with rural social workers and with lay people who are participating in rural case work programs.

(3) A visit to an agricultural college. A short course, if possible, in some subject pertaining to farm management or animal husbandry. Conferences with county farm and home demonstration agents on the scope of their work, and its possible relationship to case work.

(4) A visit to the state department of welfare or other state agency interested in rural social work, in order to become familiar with recommended or required methods of organization, duties of county workers, state resources, other state departments, institutions, traveling clinics, and so on.

Use of Personality. A social worker who feels that she is attaining unusual success may be building an entire program upon her own personality, with the result that the structure falls to pieces when she leaves the county. She should be sure that, when people agree to support her plans, they have really

[3] See bibliography, page 157.

made them their own and, fully appreciating their value, are fostering them for the sake of the work itself and not just because she asked them to do it. An attractive personality is a valuable asset, but it should be wisely used and not abused.

Leisure. Perhaps the most serious personal problem the city-bred rural worker has to face is loneliness. At first it may be difficult for her to make congenial friends and enter wholeheartedly into the social gatherings in which she will be included, but she will find that there are rare and delightful people in the country as in the city. The social worker who has gone farthest in developing her own inner resources will be most successful in discovering these people. After all, her own independence and wealth of personal resources are a prerequisite of contentment in the country as elsewhere. A variety of interests—reading books and magazines on subjects not directly related to her work, an avocation such as amateur photography or the study of birds and flowers—should improve the quality of her work and make her, as a person, a greater asset to the community.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE COMMUNITY

When the case worker actually begins her work as executive in a rural county she will find it worth while to spend the first two or three weeks in getting acquainted with the community and the people with whom she is to be associated, even

though this may mean that she will be able to do but little case work, perhaps answering only emergency calls during this preliminary period.

Immediately upon her arrival there will be conferences with the president of her board or advisory committee and other members of the board. Those who have been interested in preparing for her coming will wish to meet her within the first few days and as early as possible a board meeting should be called to consider plans for the beginning of her work. The board members can help greatly by furnishing her with information about the county and by introducing her to the people whom she should know.

The case worker in a large city may go about, from her office to visit her families and back to her office, without knowing much about the life of the community or feeling the need of personal acquaintance with the people she meets, and this situation may not materially hinder the effectiveness of her work.[4] In the country, quite the contrary is true. Here, at the beginning of her work, she is regarded as a stranger and an outsider by every one she meets and case work will have to wait upon better acquaintance. Undoubtedly some people will be inclined to look with suspicion upon one who seems to them lacking both in years of discretion and the rights of an accepted member of the community.

[4] Josephine Brown: "A City Case Worker in the Country." *The Family,* December, 1922, p. 187.

They will want to know who she is, where she was born and brought up and what qualifications give her the right to share in solving their problems.

First Contacts in the Community. Before meeting for the first time people who have as yet no contact with the work, it will be worth while to learn something about their special interests, in order that a point of contact may be established.

There are several people with whom the social worker will wish to talk informally during the first few weeks. The order in which she may see them will depend upon many factors, chief among them the auspices under which her work is done.

The social worker will wish to meet all the members of the county board and, if she is directly responsible for the administration of the poor fund, she will undoubtedly be given an opportunity to talk with them at a regular meeting soon after her arrival. Other county officials may be seen in their offices in the court house, but in planning to call upon them, she will do well to avoid especially busy seasons such as court sessions and hearings of the county board on important contracts.

The judges who have jurisdiction in the county—especially the judge who hears juvenile cases—should be seen during the first few days. If, however, the district or circuit judges have rotating terms, she may have to wait some time to see them.

She should make early contact with the superintendent of schools and with the county health officer

because their interest will have a direct and most important bearing upon the case work program. The teachers and county physicians, as well as the township officials, will be consulted later in regard to case work problems in which they are interested.

The president of the Ministerial Association should be seen and, if possible, one minister of each of the leading Protestant denominations and one or two Catholic priests who are especially interested in social problems.

Contact should be made with a few of the leaders in the stronger organizations in the county—particularly the farm bureau, the county council of parents and teachers, and the federation of women's clubs.

It is also desirable to secure at the start the interest of the editors of local newspapers, as their co-operation in the interpretation of case work is essential.

Selection of Advisors. There may be one or two people who will appear to the social worker to have a special understanding and sympathy with the problems which she is facing, and to whom she will naturally turn constantly for advice. No one or two people in any community, however helpful they may be, can furnish the well balanced point of view which may be secured from a larger number who have different interests and connections. The social worker should have this in mind as she seeks advice, and she should be on her guard against creating

misunderstanding by associating socially with a limited group of people.

The social worker should not make habitual reference to past experiences in larger places or "the way we used to do it." And it would be both superfluous and thoughtless for her to criticise local institutions and officials. She may, in fact, be one of the officials herself and may find, as those in public office often do, that there are some types of people who suspect all public officials, high or low, of being dishonest or in some other way unworthy of the responsibility intrusted to them. One social worker who has had long experience in public office says: "It is quite worth risking that reputation, however, to become a public official and learn the fine spirit, responsive natures, and honest souls found among colleagues."

Information about the County. The social worker will need definite information about the county and its resources, its history, government, population, institutions, organizations, and industries. Some of this information she may obtain by reading and inquiry before she goes into the county. Most of it she can secure gradually as opportunity offers after the work has begun. If the state department of welfare has assisted in planning for the organization, especially if a member of the state staff has made a study of the county, a great deal of material may be secured from this source.[5]

[5] For suggestions as to points to be covered, see: Francis H.

In addition to information about the county itself, knowledge of state resources is essential. This should include information about institutions, especially those for the care of dependent children, the insane, the feebleminded, epileptics, training schools for juvenile delinquents, state hospital facilities and the procedure necessary for admissions; systems of parole and probation; and state laws which affect family life and the care and protection of children, including health, education, labor, divorce, desertion, abandonment, child placing, illegitimacy, delinquency, abuse, and neglect. This information should be accurate and up to date and kept where it will be available for ready reference. If the laws have not been codified and are, therefore, not to be had in pamphlet form, copies may be secured from one of the judges in the county or from the county attorney.

Information as to historical background, traditions, and so on may be secured from the state historical library, the libraries in the county, and from older residents. Much of this history—how the county was settled, the characteristics of the early settlers and the parts of the country from which they came, their occupations and traditions—will help in understanding present conditions and attitudes in different neighborhoods.

McLean: *The Family Society,* Family Welfare Association of America, pp. 62-69; Margaret F. Byington: *What Social Workers Should Know About Their Own Communities,* Russell Sage Foundation, New York; and B. A. McClenahan: *Organizing the Community,* Century Co., pp. 78-83.

If the organization by which the social worker is employed is not new but has been established for a number of years, a review of its history, the changes which may have taken place in its program, its standing in the community, and the various problems and difficulties it has faced will furnish background for wise planning in the future. This history may be obtained from members of the board who have long been connected with the organization, from records in the office, such as minutes of board and committee meetings, and from the staff of the state department of public welfare if they have had many contacts with the county.

Physical Characteristics. Physical characteristics have an important bearing on economic conditions, types of farming, standards of living, and even local attitudes.

In one county, for example, a division of the county by a river accounted for an otherwise inexplicable social and political rift which had been handed down from the days of inadequate transportation facilities when there was little communication across this barrier.

Town and County Seat. When there is in the county a town larger than the county seat a natural rivalry may exist between the two. If the two towns have once been contestants for the county seat, some of the feeling engendered at that time may still remain.

Villages. The village is becoming a more and more important factor in rural life. Recent studies

have shown that the village population in the United States is gradually increasing. Williams states that the general dependence of villages upon the prosperity of the surrounding country is a key fact in the study of the psychological processes of the rural community.[6] Therefore, a knowledge of the history and distinguishing characteristics of the villages in the county, with an appreciation of their differences and of the factors which play an important part in village life, will have a direct bearing upon case work and the planning of the general program. For instance, the worker will find that although villages are trade centers for the surrounding agricultural areas, they have not as a rule agricultural interests of their own. They are usually business centers, having grown up around a saw mill or a grist mill located where water power was available, or as a shipping point for grain or livestock established when the railroad was first built. To this small nucleus a blacksmith shop, a store, a school have gradually been added, and later, perhaps, a grain elevator, a lumber yard and a bank, with the dwellings of those employed here. Manufacturing and trade thus set the village off from the open country. The fact that villagers are consumers of agricultural produce while the farmers are producers has given rise to considerable conflict. The antagonism between farmers and merchants is growing less be-

[6] J. M. Williams: *The Expansion of Rural Life.* Knopf, 1926, p. 64.

cause village business men are making overtures to the farmers in order to compete with city stores and mail order houses, consumers' co-operatives, chain stores, and mail clubs for buying supplies by mail; but it still persists.[7] Social relationships between village and open country are also changing.

County Consciousness. In getting information in regard to county consciousness—that sense of unity and common interest which is so essential to the successful development of a countywide program—the social worker should bear in mind the following questions: Does the county function as a unit or do township responsibilities or other divisions create difficulties? Is the only apparent unity political and therefore somewhat artificial? Are there parts of the county which are more closely allied with adjacent sections of neighboring counties by natural, commercial, or cultural interests than with the rest of the county to which they belong politically?

The social worker will also find that a knowledge of trade zones or areas, as defined by Galpin,[8] may be used to advantage in community planning in different parts of the county.

County Government. The social worker must early acquaint herself with the form and function of the county government.[9] If the case work organ-

[7] J. M. Williams: *The Expansion of Rural Life, ibid.,* p. 159.
[8] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life.* Century, 1923, Chapter IV, p. 72.
[9] Kirk H. Porter: *County and Township Government in the U. S.* (Macmillan, N. Y.) is suggested as providing a valuable background for the understanding of county government.

ization is a public agency or if the case worker is at all concerned with spending public money, it is most important to become well acquainted with the influences which may be brought to bear upon the county board by important taxpayers and voters, as well as with the methods of taxation and disbursement by which the county handles its funds. A great responsibility is carried by the county board, which decides how much it will spend, makes the appropriation, levies the tax, collects the money and spends it—it is no wonder that the members hesitate to spend money for work which is not generally understood by taxpayers and voters!

Poor Relief. The social worker should study the laws relating to the administration of poor relief and should be familiar with the system in effect in the county.

If the poor relief is administered by the county board directly, it is essential to know which member should be consulted in regard to the needs arising in each political district and the social worker will probably wish to discuss with him other questions regarding the welfare of the families in the district in which he lives. It is as important to know whether amounts of relief not fixed by state law are fixed by custom and tradition, as to learn the types of relief for which public money may legally or wisely be used. Many rural workers believe that, even if the letter of the law allows the use of tax money for the most constructive case work, it is

unwise to go too far beyond the understanding of the public.

Care of the Sick Poor. In many counties the worker will find that the care of the "sick poor" in their own homes is given by one or more county physicians who are appointed by the county board. These physicians also attend the sick in the poorhouse and jail and often, carrying this work in addition to their regular practice, they are unable to give it adequate attention. Methods of payment for medical services vary in different counties. A small salary, which must also cover the cost of drugs, may be paid by the county, or fees may be allowed in accordance with services rendered. Another plan which has worked out well in a few counties involves a contract entered into by the county board and the county medical association, the county agreeing to pay annually a stated sum to the association, which in turn agrees to apportion the work among its members. It should be noted, however, that none of these provisions for the care of the "sick poor" in their own homes include surgical care, dental care, or treatment of venereal disease, except by special arrangement.

The social worker should secure information about the general rural health problem and the work which has already been done to meet it; she should become thoroughly acquainted with the facilities in her own county for meeting health needs and with the conditions and difficulties which may affect

the establishment of an adequate public health service. If there is a county nurse who has had public health training, the case worker may learn from her much that is of great value concerning objectives and methods in the public health field. There are also possibilities for saving time and effort. Social workers and nurses, for instance, will find it possible to do certain types of work for each other in different parts of the county. There are approaches to difficult problems in families which can best be made by a socially minded nurse; and approaches to difficult health problems best made by a social worker with the public health point of view.

Infant and Maternity Welfare. The case worker should know the infant and maternity mortality rate of her county and how it compares with the rate in other communities and with that of the United States as a whole; and she should be on the alert to find means which may help to lower the death rate. The state board of health and psychopathic hospital have special clinics. Many states now have mobile clinics of various kinds, as well as child research stations which have trained instructors and hold classes for parents in rural districts. These organizations are anxious to give their services to counties where social workers will prepare the way and do follow-up work.

Mental Defects and Deficiency. The services of a psychologist may be available from a state bureau or institution. The teacher of a class for subnormal

children in one of the larger towns in the county may be equipped to give mental tests. In a few states there are now traveling psychiatric clinics. Where none of these resources is available an arrangement may be made with a psychiatrist from a state hospital to visit the county at regular intervals.

The Handicapped. The worker will wish to get full information as to facilities for the handicapped: hospitals for crippled children, schools for the blind and deaf, state departments for re-education and rehabilitation. The latter often have state agents who will come into the county and supervise vocational training and assist in carrying out other plans for the handicapped person.

Farm Bureau. The rural worker has no more important aids than the county agricultural and home demonstration agents. She should seek to understand the details of their work and learn to interpret them to her farm clients as she would interpret the services of any other specialist. These agents are usually too busy meeting the demands made upon their time by progressive farmers to seek out the men and women who need them most. If the social worker has paved the way with a family, the agents will often willingly give their best efforts in helping with the improvement of farming and housekeeping methods and in interesting the boys and girls in club work. The social worker and county agent together may do effective vocational guidance in testing the

capacity and fitness of a farmer for the job he is trying to do and, if necessary, directing him to a kind of work for which he has ability.

Tenancy. The social worker in the south, particularly in the cotton belt and the tobacco growing sections, will find a great deal of her case work conditioned by the tenant system. She will find much helpful material in a paper presented at one of the National Conferences of Social Work by a southern case worker who has had practical experience in dealing with the problem.[10] Information as to tenantry in a given county may be obtained from the farm bureau, the county agricultural agent, or directly from the state college of agriculture.

Racial Attitudes. The social worker—particularly in the south—should strive to understand the racial attitudes as well as the history of race relationships within the community where she is working. She should study the background of the Negro race just as she would study the backgrounds of foreign groups if she worked with them.

Race relationships vary tremendously even in adjoining counties or within one county; they vary among sections in the same state. No matter what the worker herself may believe, or what her principles are, it is essential for her to know the local

[10] Mrs. Houston McKee Mitchell: "The Concern of Social Case Work with the Tenant Farmer." *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work, 1928.

attitudes. She should disregard her personal feelings and face the situation as it is. She would do well to avoid discussion of such matters as a disparity in the appropriation for white and Negro work and the lack of equal educational opportunity. She should strive to think in terms of concrete instances and keep constantly in mind that the problem is not one of general race relationship, but one caused by individuals of different races living together. She must, of course, give similar consideration to differences in other racial groups in the community.

The Schools and Churches. The social worker will find occasion for working closely with the local school teachers and the ministers in the different churches. From those teachers who are working in their own home communities she will gain much valuable insight into local problems. Others, of course, may be as strange to the locality as is the social worker herself but even so may be counted among her most important allies.

In the country, the worker will find, the churches still retain much of the social responsibility which in the city has been relinquished to other institutions; and religion and church allegiance play a far more important part in the lives of the country people than they seem to do in the city. Relief-giving is considered a time-honored and cherished prerogative of the church, especially for those families who would feel the disgrace of being put on the county pauper list. This may explain the reluctance of some minis-

ters and church societies to allow a social worker, whose task they associate with "public charity," to work with the families under their care.

Giving baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas has probably been part of the work of these societies. The social worker will be tempted at once to urge that this service be centralized or that the money spent in this way be devoted to other purposes. However, she should remember that, in the country, these baskets represent not so much money as personal sacrifice; food from the giver's own cellar and pantry shelves; and hours of labor in assembling and packing the gifts. It is true that those who have devoted the most in time and goods to this form of giving may most readily see the beauty of helping a mother and her children plan their own Christmas for each other, but here, as in other relationships, lack of complete understanding on the part of the social worker may unwittingly arouse antagonism in those who might eventually have been most in sympathy with her work.

Other Organizations. The worker will wish to inform herself as to activities and services available in the county from non-social work organizations. If there is a strong federation of women's clubs, for instance, or county council of parent-teachers associations, the social worker may find that the special programs of their national or state bodies include just the activity needed in the county. For example, the rural members of the American Association of

University Women in Vermont have interested themselves particularly in the schools in their communities and have in some cases undertaken to supply books. In some states the state federation of women's clubs furnishes scholarships to school children. A rural club which has had no special program may often be interested in furnishing hot lunches or playground apparatus for a district school.

The social worker must keep constantly in mind her need to obtain a well rounded picture of the county and to this end she should consult people who belong to various groups and who live in different parts of the county—in towns, in villages, and in the open country. She should not, of course, attempt to get all this information at the start, or even soon after the work begins. She will learn much from the people who will naturally be seen during the first few weeks but by far the greater part will be revealed gradually through the case work itself.

VI. RURAL CASE WORK

THE social case worker in the rural community will find that, while the fundamental principles of case work are the same whether she works in city, town, village, or open country, there are certain modifications in method which may be advisable in making an adjustment to rural conditions.

Those Who Refer the Families. It seems even more important in a rural community than in the city that the social worker keep in close touch with the people who have asked her to help in the adjustment of family problems. She should not only take great care to talk with them after she has visited the families in which they are interested, but she should consult with them before her work with these families ceases.

Sometimes a citizen who casually mentions the plight of a family to the social worker may take for granted that by doing so he has asked her to assist them. If the social worker takes care to have a clear understanding of the responsibility which she is expected to assume in the matter, she may avoid later disappointment and criticism.

Because of the intimate relationships in rural communities—because country people are so keenly

aware of what happens on the neighboring farm—there are perhaps more instances than in cities of reports from persons who do not wish the family to know who is responsible for calling in the social worker. This reluctance may have a valid reason back of it and the social worker cannot wisely ignore it. Her knowledge of relationships among rural neighbors will guide her procedure.

Social Service Exchange. There will probably be no social service exchange.[1] Outside the files in the office of the agency, the only method of knowing who else is interested in a family will be routine consultation with others who have known it: judges, county superintendents of schools, county nurse, and organizations working in the community where the family lives. Social service exchanges in nearby or even distant cities may be consulted in special cases and, in some instances, a nearby large city exchange will be glad to include adjacent counties in its services.

First Contact with a Family. Until the work of the agency is well known in the open country the majority of farm families will be referred by others and the first interview will naturally take place on

[1] A social service exchange is a card index giving the names and addresses of individuals who are receiving help and service from the social agencies of the community. The cards contain no data as to the character or condition of the individual—merely the name of the agency giving help or to whom the individual is known. For details as to organization address the Association of Community Chests and Councils, Graybar Bldg., 43d and Lexington Ave., New York City.

the farm. If, however, a member of the family has driven many miles to consult with the social worker, it would seem more considerate to talk over his problem as thoroughly as possible at the office rather than to wait until the worker visits the home. If the first talk is in a home in a distant part of the county, it is necessary to use the opportunity to the utmost as the busy worker may not be able to return to that neighborhood for some time. This necessity, coupled with the difficulty of gaining the confidence of extremely shy people, makes great demands upon the worker's skill. Seemingly trivial outward matters, directly conditioned by the worker's own understanding of rural attitudes, are tremendously important to the people she is trying to help.

An illustration of the wrong approach is the story of the worker who drove her car into the yard and sat in it honking her horn for the family to come out of the house and talk to her! There is another tale of a worker who greeted a farmer with the question, "How many silos did you lose in the disaster?" and later asked him what "make of cows" he kept!

OBTAINING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAMILY

The city case worker usually learns much concerning the mother of the family from the condition of the house and children; the visitor to the farm has the same opportunity to learn about the farmer. The condition of the barn and out-buildings, the state of the barnyard, fences, and farm machinery, the grade of cattle, the evidence their appearance gives of care or neglect, the nearness of the pigsty

to the house, the piles of manure banked against the house for warmth—all tell their own story.

There is special significance in the relative size and comfort of the dwelling house and barn. A small overcrowded house with no modern conveniences, standing beside a large, elaborately equipped barn, with a tool shed sheltering the latest farm machinery, tells the story of an efficient farmer who may be sacrificing the comfort and perhaps the health of his family to his business. Often the work elements of farming actually smother the home life. They do touch the day-to-day family life at almost every point, but the farmer who appreciates the values of worth-while living will keep them as far removed as possible.[2]

In estimating the mother's ability as a housekeeper it is important for the worker to remember that this woman probably has many chores outside the house and that a busy season such as harvest time, or a slight illness may seriously disrupt an otherwise orderly household.[3] It is easier in the village or on the farm than in the city to see the father of the family. He is in his shop nearby or in the fields. In fact, he is so likely to take part in the interview that if the worker wishes to talk with the father and mother separately she must make some special arrangement to see the one or the other elsewhere.

[2] C. J. Galpin: "Physical Aspects of the American Farm Home." *Proceedings,* Third National Country Life Conference, 1920, p. 154.
[3] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life.* Century, 1923, Chapter V.

Neighborhood Sources. In consulting people outside the immediate family, the social worker needs must modify the principles of choice which would govern her in a large city by those elements so important in the country—time and distance. After or even before the first call, when a long trip is involved which cannot be soon repeated, the worker must see neighbors and, if necessary, the relatives who live near at hand, the corner storekeeper, the doctor, the minister. She governs these visits by her decision as to which people she must see in person, which may be reached as effectively by letter, and which may as well be consulted by someone whom she may find to help her with the family problems. She must also bear in mind that some of the people to be consulted may be willing to give a neighbor or friend, assisting the social worker, more information than they would give to the social worker herself, who may be a comparative stranger. She should also guard against the danger of being unconsciously influenced by a preponderance of second-hand informants of strong and similar opinion, who may be among the first people she consults.[4]

It is possible that the feeling of community independence may be so strong in some parts of the county that it may be necessary (in the beginning at least) for the case worker to have her contacts entirely through local people and not directly with

[4] Mary E. Richmond: *Social Diagnosis*. Russell Sage Foundation, 1917, pp. 170-176.

those needing help. Perhaps a local society has for years been doing the "relief work" in the township in which a new family has been reported. The members of the society and probably their mothers before them have prided themselves on the fact that they have taken care of every family in need, including giving food, making clothing, and paying rent, in addition to those wonderful neighborly services which are rendered by the farmer's wife as by no one else in the world. A thoughtless intrusion into the field of such a society would mean disaster.

In one situation of this kind, the social worker first consulted the president of the society, suggesting that she make certain inquiries. The society then offered to give the emergency relief needed, and the president gladly shared with the worker the information which she had secured. This paved the way for the worker's first visit to the family and the subsequent cooperation of the society and worker in further investigation, planning and treatment. In another case, the social worker supplied the president of a local relief society with a revolving fund of $5, and explained that she, the social worker, was required to report expenditures weekly to the county board. The president instantly changed her attitude from one of suspicion verging on antagonism to one of the most cordial partnership. Thereafter she consulted the social worker not only about expenditures but about every phase of her work.

The families reported will generally fall into two classes as far as residence and available local information is concerned: those who have lived for one or two generations in the county, usually within a radius of twenty or thirty miles, and those who have within a few years come there as strangers, perhaps from a distant state. The social worker will usually

find it a far simpler matter to get the main drift of the lives of the families in the first group. Often before the first visit she may quite easily look up the birth, marriage, and other records in the court house and, at the same time, get a good deal of background from the judge, the county commissioner of the district, and the superintendent of schools. This information probably will not only furnish a valuable point of contact with the family but will supply much material which otherwise might have to be included in the first interview. Naturally, she should take care that information secured before she sees the family does not prejudice her or unduly influence her reactions.

If the neighborhood is not familiar with the condition of the family, or the particular situation which has been reported, the worker must be especially meticulous in making inquiries so as not to spread the story abroad. This presents a real difficulty, as it often seems necessary to consult the neighbors and these very neighbors may be relatives of the family or those upon whom the social worker must in the end rely for aid with the family problem; for in the country the broken or destitute home is often next door to the home which is normal and prosperous. For instance, a large farm may have been divided among several children, and the farm of the son who is subnormal or the "black sheep" of the family may be surrounded by those of his more prosperous brothers.

Occasionally a report of sex delinquency comes to the social worker in a form which makes her wonder whether it is really true or simply the result of gossip. If it is possible to do so without spreading the story further, she may find it best to probe more deeply for facts, before going to the family. A rural worker tells of a high school girl who reported that another student was pregnant. The worker did not like to go to the girl or her mother without more definite information and so consulted the school nurse who was able to learn, without spreading the gossip further, that the story was entirely false.

Employers. The employer in the country, the farmer who has hired help, or the owner of a small creamery or factory will have much more than a formal work record to give the inquiring social worker. This is also true of the village or farm landlord. The farm owner, if he lives nearby, will have made it his business to watch closely the farming methods of his tenants and will often be keenly alive to the relationship between the tenant's home life and his efficiency as a farmer.

Teachers. The social worker will often consult the teacher of the district or village school before she makes the first visit to the home. If the teacher has always lived in the neighborhood or if she has a keen interest in her pupils, she will have much to contribute to both investigation and treatment—more than the city teacher in like circumstances. But in approaching her and in evaluating the informa-

tion she has to give, the social worker would do well to remember that this teacher is employed by the local school board and may be influenced by local attitudes, and possibly by personal interest. Moreover, the principal of the village or consolidated school may be more socially minded and more interested in the pupils than any of the teachers under him. Attendance at school, she will find, is affected by the distance from the farm, weather conditions, and the state of the roads. Children are often kept out of school to help on the farm in busy seasons and if a family has moved into the district after the school term has begun, the children may not have been entered in school at all and there will be no record of their names on the school census.

The county superintendent can give information regarding work permits and special vacations allowed for farm work. In visiting the district school to inquire about the children of some one family, the social worker must be sure that the children in question are not made conspicuous. Unless she makes the call before or after school hours, she will find it almost impossible to conceal the purpose of her visit from the other children, who may quickly begin to taunt those who have been singled out in this way. This singling-out hardship is frequently suffered by children of destitute families particularly if the teacher interests herself in getting made-over clothing from neighbors. In order to avoid this opprobrium attached to hand-me-downs, one social worker

took pains to secure clothing for her boys and girls from a church society in a different part of the county.

Doctors. If there is a family doctor he may be, like most other rural sources of information, an invaluable ally. The worker will find it a good idea to consult him early in all plans regarding the health of the family. If he is not especially interested in social problems, the county nurse may be used as an intermediary. The rural social worker often meets with antagonism on the part of local doctors who dislike to see patients whom they do not consider eligible for county care sent to hospitals outside the county at county expense. This presents a real difficulty when there are no local facilities for preventive or remedial treatment which the patient seems to need.

Clergymen. Rural pastors often have not only an intimate knowledge of the family problems of the members of their congregations but are sometimes farmers themselves or possessed of a knowledge of farming which is a great asset in enabling them to participate intelligently in the solution of farmers' problems. The pastors, like the country doctors, may have developed their own method of social case work. They may welcome the assistance of the social worker or may consider her an intruder upon what they believe to be the province of the church. Here as elsewhere the worker must use the case work approach and exert every effort to consult the pastor of each family from the beginning of her contact,

seeking his advice and help along every step of the way. The church with its organizations for young people and adults is often the social center of the community and she may use it to great advantage in overcoming the lack of human contacts in the isolated farm family.[5] The pleasure of a farm mother in the Ladies' Aid meetings which she is enabled to attend after years of absence is almost beyond estimation. Nor, in considering the religious life of the children, should the worker overlook the part that a wise and socially-minded Sunday-school teacher might play.

There may be in the neighborhood no church of the denomination to which the family belongs, and in such instances the worker may introduce the family into the parish of a denomination of a similar faith and practice where they will feel at home, or help them find a church of the same faith not too far away. There may be a minister in the neighboring community, even in another county, who would be willing to visit regularly a group of families of the same faith. The social worker should take pains to know the missionary pastors who include her county in their territory.

RECREATION

In considering the recreation and leisure hour activities of the farmer and his family, particularly the more isolated farmer, the worker must remember

[5] C. J. Galpin: *Rural Life.* Century, 1923, Chapter III.

that the exacting nature of farm work is such that some member of the family must be on the job morning and night. Cows must be milked, animals must be fed, chores must be done. Truly, the farmer's work is never over. He has no vacation and very little time off. If there is a hired man or older son to leave in charge, the farmer and his wife may go to the college of agriculture for the short course of three days or a week. But the long winter months offer his nearest approach to leisure. Then, if he is not doing repairing or indoor work of one kind or another, he has a chance to turn to studying and reading and a sociable time with his family or neighbors.

The regular recreation of the family is usually measured by the number of clubs and societies to which the members belong. Often the whole family goes to a club meeting together. Saturday night shopping trips, band concerts and sociables, which were formerly almost the only forms of recreation in which the farm families indulged, have been supplemented recently by moving pictures, public dance halls, and pool rooms—now that better roads and the extensive use of automobiles have brought villages and towns within short driving distance. Better farming methods have given the farm family greater leisure. However, the question may well be raised as to whether this greater leisure is being used most profitably.

The case worker may interest clubs and societies,

particularly parent-teachers' associations, in arranging supervised play for a group of children; she may ask a woman's club to supply skates or tennis rackets for children who cannot afford them, and interest the club members who have cars in taking for occasional drives overworked mothers who never have an opportunity to go anywhere.

If there is need of recreational or inspirational work with young people, the worker may interest a club or society, a minister, a teacher, a young business man, or a girl just home from college in starting a social club, a scout troup, or a little theater club. The Drama League of America, with headquarters in Chicago, has worked out little theater plans for rural communities which have been highly successful in many parts of the country, and will furnish valuable suggestions.[6]

FINANCIAL STATUS OF A FAMILY

The actual financial status and resources of a farmer's family are most difficult to determine. The value of land, usually depending upon its salableness, the size of the mortgage and the attitude of the bank in regard to payment, the kinds of crops, the fertility of the soil, the estimated crop per acre, the uncertain market, the ever uncertain weather, the quality of the pasture which directly conditions the milk production of the herd, the price of cream,

[6] See also Clarence Arthur Perry: *Work of the Little Theaters.* Russell Sage Foundation, New York.

the grade of cows producing the cream, the number of non-producing animals which must be fed through the winter, the number of children old enough to help on the farm so that extra labor need not be employed, the condition of the farm machinery, the extent to which farming is diversified, the size of the garden and of the flock of chickens, how much may be allowed on the food budget for vegetables, eggs and milk produced on the farm, whether animals are butchered on the farm and how much of the meat supply can be counted on from this source—all these things must be considered in determining the size of the family's income. Rent, or taxes and interest on the mortgage, payment to be made on stock and machinery, the cost of fertilizer and harvesting, and the means by which fuel is obtained must also be taken into account.

It is impossible to do more than approximate the budget. The opinion of the school nurse regarding the condition of the children may help in deciding whether or not relief is needed. If the children are undernourished, ignorance or inadequate food—sometimes both—may be responsible. On a farm the proper food can be more easily obtained than in the city if the mother is convinced of its value and properly instructed in its preparation and use. It is most difficult for the social worker to determine just how much relief to give, for she must consider equally the needs of the children and the independence of the family.

Budgets. The state college of agriculture may have material on budgets and standards of living for farm families, or the information may be secured from the Federal Department of Agriculture at Washington.[7] The budgets issued by the Department of Home Economics of the State Agricultural College, at Ames, Iowa, giving the amounts required in pounds, have been used to great advantage; supervisors and court seem readily to accept a family budget prepared according to the Ames standard, and reduced to pounds and cost at local prices whereas, if the budget is presented in the usual form, giving costs direct, their reaction often is that the amount is "too much."

Marginal families offer a perplexing problem. Should the income provide a satisfactory standard of living? The majority of farm labor families have an income far below the minimum standard worked out at Ames. There is need for a study of rural marginal families in order to learn how it is that some children are well nourished and others on the same diet are not.

During the past few years extensive studies of farm income in its relation to standards of living have been made by the United States Department of Agriculture and by various state agricultural colleges. The reports of these studies should prove helpful, not only for definite information as to sources of income, but in suggesting values to be

[7] See bibliography, page 164.

considered and objectives sought in estimating fairly the farmer's standard of living and helping him to improve it. The report of a study made in 1926 by the United States Department of Agriculture, of 2,886 white farm families, takes the "standard of living" to mean "the economic goods contributing to the maintenance of health, transportation, education, recreation, and social relationships of the family, as well as those satisfying the more material needs—food, housing, fuel, and clothing" and states:

> Usually, from one-third to one-half of the value of the farm family's living represents food products, use of the house, and fuel furnished from the farm. This part of the living is not to be had free of cost to the farmer, however. It represents labor (paid and unpaid), capital, and sometimes credit, if not a small outlay of cash for storage purposes or for preparation of the goods which are furnished.
>
> The standard of living can not be raised effectively through the expenditure of more money, if long days of monotonous labor prevents the fullest use of goods obtainable with more ample funds.[8]

Relief. Once the standard of living is ascertained and the real need of the family determined, the social worker must look to ways and means of giving relief. Her real object, of course, will be to get to the heart of the difficulty and help the family work out a solution. But meanwhile life must go on, and, if the family is in actual want, one of the first, most

[8] E. L. Kirkpatrick: *The Farmer's Standard of Living;* A Socio-Economic Study of 2886 White Farm Families of Selected Localities in 11 States. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 1466, Washington, D. C., 1926.

definite forms that help will take will be that of furnishing groceries to those in need.

There appear to be four general methods in use in different localities by means of which groceries are furnished:

(1) By wholesale contract, when the food is kept in a storeroom and handed out to those in need. This method is still followed by some overseers of the poor.

(2) By contract with a retail grocer, whereby the lowest bidder furnishes groceries to families on order from proper authority.

(3) By orders on a nearby retail store.

(4) By cash given to the family. In some counties this is limited to payment of mothers' allowances by the court.

When the family is inclined to be extravagant the retail store order may be used to advantage, especially if the storekeeper is ready to assist the social worker in controlling the kind and quality of goods purchased. However many rural workers give cash wherever it seems wise, in order to save the client from the publicity of a relief order on the corner store.

ADJUSTMENTS IN FAMILY LIFE

The social worker will find that getting at the heart of the difficulty is a less definite and less easy matter than furnishing relief in the form of groceries. She must realize first of all that, before she

can be of any real help to her rural family, she must know them both as a family and as individuals. She must consider always the psychology of them as a group of people living together. And, before she can approach a solution of their problems, she must understand their relationships, one to another, and the rural influences that have molded them.

The farmer's family is apt to be patriarchal in type. The father, who manages the farm, generally dominates the home life. If his wife is inclined to be submissive, she may not challenge this domination but find her compensation in seeking sympathy. If she has a strong personality and is proud, friction is likely to result. If she is more competent than he is, there may be nagging. If she is a woman of high ideals she may try to satisfy her suppressed longings by winning opportunities for the education of an unusual son. The social worker will discover that the girls of the family often grow up with a feeling of inferiority to the boys and often stay at home working without wages while the boys are educated. The husband generally maintains the traditions of his father's family, while his wife, who has perhaps been reared in another type of farm family, often brings another viewpoint to the home.

Behavior Problems. Behavior problems of children, the social worker will find, may sometimes be directly traceable to mental deficiency or, more frequently, to lack of adjustment in the home. In some families revolt against an excessive amount of farm

labor may lead to running away from home. The worker must realize that many children live in homes that are narrow and restricted in ideas and ideals, where recreation, beauty and education are lacking. Fear and self-consciousness may play an important part in behavior difficulties. Children who live in the open country often acquire a fear—of animals, solitude, dark buildings, and lonely roads at night—which is intensified by stories they hear and by superstitions which the community commonly accepts. If they have difficulty at school, if they are slow to learn, or if they are more poorly dressed than the other children, they suffer acutely from punishment, criticism, and ridicule with permanent self-consciousness as a result.

Child Labor. If the problem is one of an overworked child, the worker must approach the farmer with all the tact she can muster. She must take care not only to understand fully the practical difficulties the farmer is facing, but also to give him unmistakable evidence of this understanding and make quite plain the fact that she is carefully weighing his problems in relation to the welfare of the children. It is also important that she make clear that she is in no wise suggesting that the children be relieved from all work, but only from that which impairs their health and interferes with their education and a reasonable opportunity for play.

The labor of children who are paid for their work on farms is a problem different from and more com-

plex than that of children who work on their home farms. It involves not only the attitude of the employer but the adjustment of the economic problem in the child's family, educating public opinion as to existing conditions, and finally securing remedial legislation. Good school attendance laws and adequate enforcement are essential in the solution of the problem.

Neglect and Abuse of Children. The social worker will not be surprised to discover that there are neglected and abused children in rural communities as well as in cities. The country has its quota of brutal parents and drunken parents and nervously irresponsible parents; and children suffer from unspeakable exhibitions of anger or cruelty. The worker will, of course, make every effort to effect such adjustments in homes of this type as may afford not only protection for the children but reasonable assurance of their welfare. Where lack of capacity for improvement on the part of the older members of the family makes this impossible, and the protection of the children requires that they be removed permanently from the home, court action is necessary. If the situation is acute, the social worker may ask the judge to give an order that the children be immediately removed, pending final decision as to their care. There will probably be no institution in the county where they may be placed temporarily. The county farm (poor house), which is sometimes considered in such emergencies, is not a suitable

place for children for any length of time—no matter how brief. Of course, the jail would not be suitable, even for delinquent children. The sheriff's wife may be willing to care for the children in her own home, or the social worker may find another private home where they can be placed at the expense of the county.

In bringing court action in these as in other cases, the social worker should make every effort to find a citizen who will sign the complaint and he should have all evidence available. It may be exceedingly difficult, however, for the worker to persuade people who know the situation first hand to testify: they will probably be neighbors of the family and exceedingly reluctant to interfere because of fear of public opinion, or of arousing the antagonism of the family or its relatives and friends, some of whom may be influential.

> The average rural community will endure a great deal before it will complain against a home or make any practical effort to rescue the child from cruel or irresponsible parents. Social workers in the country know, from personal experience, case after case that illustrates the unwillingness of the usual community to handle with dispatch and justice cases of family cruelty.[9]

In such cases, the disinterested social worker, who has only the welfare of the children at heart, is in a position to mobilize the neighborhood forces and to supply the initiative lacking. Sometimes the neigh-

[9] Ernest R. Groves: *The Rural Mind and Social Welfare*. University of Chicago Press, 1922, p. 115.

bors welcome the action and are ready to help in every way possible. More often, however, the social worker must use all her skill in persuading them to testify—helping them to look at the situation from every standpoint and explaining to them that the testimony of those who have direct evidence is essential if the children are to be given the protection which the community naturally wishes to provide for all its members.

One social worker succeeded so well in doing this that she not only found a citizen who was willing to sign the complaint and neighbors who were willing to testify, but she aroused such interest that her presence at the hearing was not necessary. The testimony of the neighbors and of the doctor who had examined the children was considered sufficient by the judge. Cases such as those concerning an unmarried mother or a child against whom a statutory offense has been committed do not often come up but, when they do, they require courage and the skilful mobilization of understanding citizens to put the thing through without permanently harming the agency. In such cases the board should back the social worker wholeheartedly and make every effort to interpret to the community their reasons for considering the action necessary.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

The fact that village people live in close proximity to one another and know and are known by their

neighbors goes far to make possible the development of community attitudes toward the characters, actions, and modes of living of members of the community. Accepted conventions and codes may vary from community to community; but when the accepted code is violated, the community attitude of disapproval and perhaps of condemnation makes it exceedingly difficult for the offender to make a new start. Such offences as drinking, shiftlessness, or sex delinquency may even bring about virtual ostracism. The social worker should be on her guard against letting herself fall uncritically into the community attitude, instead of analyzing and truly appraising it and trying to change it if need be. She should realize that it may be very superficial and a matter of personal opinion—and not based at all on facts. Opinions are often given with finality and the facts often seem to be complete, but this should only challenge her to use her initiative in seeking new sources of information.

The social worker will usually find it wise to learn something of the background of those whom she consults, as their attitudes are necessarily colored by their background and experiences in life. The worker should guard against accepting as facts information supplied too exclusively by persons who have a limited life experience, or accepting as final the necessarily limited point of view of a single individual. She will also find often that a person whom she consults about one family instantly thinks of

another who he knows is receiving (or who he thinks should be receiving) the attention of the social worker and as a result much of his information may be given on a comparative basis. This may be illuminating, or it may decidedly blur the issues.

The people whom the social worker gradually comes to know in the different communities in the county may often be of great help in developing family and community attitudes. There have been instances of apparently successful work over a period of months carried on exclusively through correspondence between the social worker and the families and between the social worker and the people who are interested in helping.

Throughout her case work the social worker must beware of the effect of lack of resources on the quality of her work. There will be a tendency to slump because of the scarcity of facilities for diagnosis and treatment but this very scarcity may prove a stimulus to better work. Moreover, she should form the habit of making all her plans on the basis of ideal facilities for treatment—then use her imagination and initiative, together with the data revealing community needs, to stimulate the development of the desired resources.

VII. OFFICE ADMINISTRATION AND RECORD WRITING

THE OFFICE

THE office is usually located at the county seat, often in the court house; or, for reasons of leadership, another town may be chosen, depending on local conditions. Eventually it may be possible to have a district office in another town. From the start the case worker may plan to spend a definite time each week in other towns, arranging for headquarters at some central place such as the community center, women's club rooms, or library.

Some county workers have made their waiting rooms pleasant places, with rugs, comfortable chairs, plants, and pictures.[1]

Book-keeping. The case worker should work out all book-keeping plans in detail with the county treasurer and auditor or clerk (if it is a public agency), or with the treasurer of the board (if it is a private society). When she handles both public and private funds, it is necessary to keep separate records. She usually receives public money through

[1] See also Chapter IV.

the voucher system from the office of the county treasurer or auditor.

Provisions for keeping the books vary in different communities. The executive may do the book-keeping—though this is not often a wise plan—subject to the approval of the treasurer of the society and to an annual audit; or, if the stenographer is competent, she may be trained to do it, saving the executive's time for other things. The treasurer of a private society may prefer to have the book-keeping done in his own business office, but convenience and privacy would make desirable the recording of detailed relief expenditures in the office of the agency.

Whoever keeps the books should keep all classifications of expenditures under the headings which have been used in making out the budget so that the executive will be able to make constant comparisons of the amounts spent with the amounts budgeted.

The agency should place a small revolving fund, renewable monthly, in the executive's name for emergency relief and minor office expenses. Such a fund may not be possible in a public agency but it is worth trying for. The amount will, of course, depend on local conditions. And the social worker should make accurate reports of its use.

Files. In addition to the usual files of case histories and material concerned with administration, such as correspondence, minutes, and reports, the social worker or her assistant should keep a card

file of all families reported. This will not only be the means of checking applications to see if they have been known before, but, as it is used more and more, at the informal request of other agencies, it may eventually become a county social service exchange. The social worker will do well to keep this file from the start, as far as time permits, along with all the data usual to a social service exchange. Several county workers use statistical cards as registrations instead of a separate card file.

The case worker will find that a card file of active cases arranged by districts, townships, or trade areas, together with a map of the county on which colored pins locate the cases, and a monthly or weekly sheet (instead of, or in addition to a day sheet) will help materially in planning work and arriving at a fair division of time between different parts of the county. A tickler file also is a great help, especially when the worker must see families receiving allowances at regular intervals and attend court hearings. Otherwise she will have to keep note of these meetings and appointments in a less convenient manner.

Statistical Cards. As far as time permits, the worker—or her assistant—should keep files of information regarding county and state resources; and the names of people who are available for committees or for volunteer service.

The social worker will find simple statistical cards necessary as the basis for reports and the develop-

ment of community resources. These cards require the expenditure of a certain amount of time but it is a question whether the time required to keep them up is as great as that needed to go over a large file of case records to glean information when it is required for some special purpose. Just one case may reveal the need for a county nurse, a county tuberculosis sanatorium, a children's preventorium, a specialist in psychiatry, and classes for subnormal children. Each need should be noted on a separate card kept in a separate file. As other cases show the same needs, the worker may make a notation on the proper card, with the name of the family, date, and relevant information. She may also add suggestions of people or organizations who may be interested in helping to meet the particular need. The whole will then be at hand to use as concrete evidence to show the board, county officials, or any other group when the time comes for urging a new development.

County Case Record. Some chronological account of the development of case work in the county and of the development of other resources—a county case history, in fact—would be of the greatest interest and value as teaching material and for purposes of special study. Because of the extra time required, very few county workers have assembled material of this kind thus far.

Maps and Directories. The worker may secure road, school, and district maps from the county

engineer at the court house. The county substitute for the city directory is an atlas which contains a detailed map of each township, showing the boundaries of each farm with the name of the owner and the number of acres, all schools, churches, town halls, and other landmarks. An alphabetical list of farm owners is also given for each township. This kind of atlas may not be available for counties in all parts of the country and, if the social worker can secure it, it may be several years old. Even so she will find it one of the most useful articles in the office. Farms may have been divided or sold or rented since it was published, but the changes are not apt to be many and the atlas as it stands will tell an interesting story of changes in the county.

A collection of the different telephone directories of the county will supplement the atlas. A state year book giving statistics, lists of officials, and reports of departments and members of the state legislature will also be useful for reference.

If there is time, or a volunteer can be found who will keep it up, the office will find it useful to make a spot map which shows the residences of people who are actively assisting in the work, and the neighborhoods having committees or organizations directly assisting. This will help in visualizing the county and planning the direction of developmental work. All kinds of maps, graphs, and charts are important aids in bringing special needs before the board and other groups.

Stenographic Help. If the worker has no stenographer to assist her, she may find a volunteer to help out by keeping the office and perhaps typing. Although this service may be irregular and may not provide sufficient stenographic help, she will find it most welcome. Board members, or others, who help in this way for even a short period will get a vivid picture of the work of the office and should be valuable aids in later securing stenographic service. Sometimes the social worker may arrange to use the part-time service of a stenographer with the farm bureau or the county attorney; one worker arranged for it with a doctor who was on the board of the agency. These substitutes may help exceedingly, but both board members and worker should take great care to insure the absolutely confidential nature of records and other office business. This is the chief objection to the plan, sometimes tried, of having all calls coming in during the social worker's absence transferred to another office.

RECORD WRITING

The city-trained worker in a rural county who has the problem of case recording with little or no stenographic help will do well to start afresh in her thinking on the subject with the following statement made by Mrs. Sheffield in her *Social Case History:*

> Defined in terms of purpose the case history of today is a body of personal information conserved with a view to the three ends of social case work; namely, (1) the immediate

purpose of furthering effective treatment of individual clients, (2) the ultimate purpose of general social betterment, and (3) the incidental purpose of establishing the case worker herself in critical thinking.[2]

Does the situation justify an attempt to keep records which will serve all three purposes and, if not, which of the three shall be kept in mind? The worker who has been taught that all apparently insignificant information should be recorded, because of its possible value at some later time, may have to make a drastic adjustment in her thinking and practice. She will need to acquire exceptional skill and discrimination in eliminating all but the most salient material. She must be merciless in ruling out the recording of motions, the "machinery" of case work. Mrs. Sheffield states elsewhere that certain facts are not significant for immediate treatment and can be put in or not according to the vision of the social worker and the time available.[3] But the worker must avoid verbosity and repetition at all times.

The worker may note appointments in a tickler file and not record them until after she has kept the appointment, and then perhaps as part of a summarized entry. One worker who has no stenographer uses for each visit and office interview a form on which there is a place for name, date, place, and purpose of interview, and remarks. This form,

[2] Mrs. Ada E. Sheffield: *The Social Case History*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, pp. 5-6.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

neatly filled out in longhand after the interview she files with the record until such time as she can type it in herself. In the meantime the information is in readable form and chronological order.

Another worker who has a stenographer and keeps chronological records writes:

It is probably unnecessary for me to explain that all the contacts with the families are not recorded. I doubt if I can say that I have recorded just the significant material! From the beginning I endeavored to leave out all details regarding more or less personal contacts with my clients—for instance, the fact that Mary A carries my laundry and brings me a bouquet every Sunday when she comes for it, and her mother sends me raspberry pie whenever they have it at home. Perhaps it would not be amiss to indicate that the A's live across the street from where I stay, a half a block from my home. Somehow I feel that the personal contacts with the clients in a rural district are very much a part of the case work treatment but I have for the most part left it out of the records.

The Iowa group of rural workers has thus worked out the matter of record-writing:

Face cards for family case records have been printed by the Iowa State Conference according to a form worked out by this group.[4]

How much information should be included in the records where, in small communities, it may not be kept as confidential because of the stenographer's interest and acquaintance with most of the people mentioned? What information is to be included where the lack of stenographic help is a handicap? Discussion led to the conclusion that at least the first interview and the face sheet should be written up thoroughly; that all correspondence, reports to the courts or to institutions help make up the record and may take the place of much of the narrative; that information from several reference calls can

[4] Copies may be obtained from the University Extension Department, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

frequently more safely and wisely be summarized and the sources of the information grouped in the record.

The group agreed that a few "model" records should be kept by every worker to prove to herself and others the best of which she is capable; that relief and budget sheets should be kept; and that a running history of individuals and of the family might be separated and placed at the front of the record.

The worker should give careful consideration not only to the ability of the stenographer to keep the confidence of clients but also to the question as to who may safely be allowed to read the records. It surely should be possible for the worker to impress those who are helping with family problems with a sense of responsibility for the trust reposed in them and to develop in them a professional pride in their ability to keep these confidences.

The briefer record the worker may consider primarily a record of growth and development. It may begin with the history and first interview. The remainder of the record she may then give in the form of summaries, written once or twice a week, or even once a month, according to the significance of the material, and giving the outstanding factors in the development of each member of the family and of the family as a whole, with diagnosis and plans. This may at first require even more time than the writing of the chronological record. It certainly will require more careful thought and greater skill. But, as the worker develops this skill, she should save time not only in the writing but in rereading. Such a record should enable her—or anyone else who has

access to it—to grasp almost at a glance the trends in the life of the family, the problems confronting each member of the family, and the steps already taken in treatment.

VIII. INTERPRETATION AND FINANCE

INTERPRETATION

INTERPRETATION to the county commissioner or supervisor is probably one of the most challenging tasks of the rural case worker. The following suggestions are based on methods which have already been used with considerable success.

In any program of interpretation there are certain underlying principles which the social worker must constantly keep in mind. First of all her facts must be accurate and she must present them vividly. People are convinced by actual examples rather than by theories and abstract principles. She should, moreover, present all sides of a question and grant always failure and handicaps, as thoughtful people are suspicious of an enterprise which meets with no difficulties. Although it is important and necessary to publicize the case work through the newspapers, talks to organizations, and personal interviews, she will find that by far the most valuable means of education is actual demonstration to those who are in a position to see what is being accomplished in their own community. Securing the participation of

these people in the work itself is a still more valuable way of gaining their understanding.[1]

Where some of the supervisors are especially concerned with the need of saving the taxpayers' money, the worker may approach the whole subject from that standpoint. The preventive nature of constructive work which tends to keep both children and adults out of tax-supported institutions; the organization of relief from natural sources and from other organizations in the community; the discovery of families receiving unneeded relief; settlements for the support of illegitimate children who would otherwise have been dependent; success in securing support from deserting fathers—all these she can vividly explain from actual case work experience.

The interest which the worker has aroused in this way she can direct to the value of the constructive work for its own sake. It will be worth while for her to estimate, on the basis of total cost to the county, the actual expense in terms of cents or mills per acre, and cents or dollars per capita. The Georgia State Department of Public Welfare has prepared excellent publicity along this line which has been used with success in many of their counties.

The procedure advised in a Minnesota county to interpret case work to the Board of County Commissioners also offers suggestions:[2]

[1] Valuable suggestions for interpretation will be found in N. A. Crawford's "The Farmer Looks at Social Work." *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work, 1927, p. 662.

[2] Summarized from Marion Day's "Publicity with County

They advised short verbal reports or written reports that members might read at their leisure. At the first meeting the worker attended, the Board was so busy that she decided she could not hold their attention and no verbal report was made. She merely ventured to tell them she had found during the month that three women were receiving county allowances to which they were not entitled. The written report consisted of statistical data on one sheet. New cases for the month in each commissioner's district came first, then the number and kinds of cases active for the month in each district; total case load; number of court cases in each district with the charges brought. No names were given.

Later she consulted the members about many of the cases in their own districts. They gave helpful information as they were all old residents; and they were kept in close touch with progress from that time on. Gradually the commissioners began to take for granted the presence of the case worker at meetings. Listless acceptance of her reports gradually changed to genuine interest. They began to ask questions. They were anxious to know which member had the most new cases and in whose district the worker had spent most of her time. They were also surprised to find that the district they considered the freest from social problems frequently had the greatest number of delinquency and illegitimacy cases.

The case worker needed money to board children while their mother went to a sanitarium. The commissioner from that district himself explained the situation to the Board and told them that he and the case worker had made four other plans for the care of the children, which had all failed; and without hesitation the commissioners assumed the responsibility for boarding the children.

To Individuals. Good case work is its own best interpreter. People who report family problems, those who are consulted about a family, and those who actually help in the case work, know what is being done. It is the case worker's business at the

Boards." *Proceedings,* Minnesota State Conference of Social Work, 1925, p. 263. See also Marie Dresden: "It's Ketchin'," *The Family,* Feb., 1933, p. 343.

expense, if necessary, of considerable time, to explain why it is done—and how. The intimate relationships of rural life bring a rather large group into touch with the work for each family and each group includes a few people whose opinion carries weight in the community. The village store keeper may be a county supervisor; the uncle of a delinquent girl may be the president of the farm bureau, and so on. The worker should make the most of every contact in her day-to-day job. This is important in city case work; it is a practical necessity in the country. She should never miss an opportunity to give information in one way or another to individuals in the community. She might even mail occasional mimeographed reports of her activities to a list taken from the county telephone directories. This will mean much more in the country than in the city where reading matter is more plentiful.

To Groups. The social worker will find that perhaps next in importance to enlightening individuals are opportunities to talk to meetings of various kinds. She should use untechnical language always in these talks and tell simple case stories, fitting her illustrations to the special interests of the group. And she should be prepared for the practical and sympathetic response: "What can we do to help?" She should meet it with a definite answer if possible. She might, for instance, ask a responsive Sunshine Society to make baby clothes, or a Kiwanis Club to do something for a crippled child. When board

members and others who are in close touch with the work give talks, she should supply them with up-to-date information and with case stories which they may be able to tell without revealing the identity of the families.

Regional conferences under the auspices of the state conference of social work are held in some states. In many counties an increasing number of officials and citizens attend both state and regional conferences every year. Many of them contribute to the programs. Reports to local meetings after these conferences are an important means of interpretation.

Occasional meetings held primarily in the interest of case work are entirely practical.[3] A committee from the general neighborhood could arrange a program of one or two talks, local entertainment, and refreshments. Invitations carried home by the children might reach the residents in a consolidated school district, and the meeting might be held in the schoolhouse. A local choral club or a high school glee club might furnish music, or a high school dramatic club give a short play illustrative of case work. The social worker might even ask the domestic science class of the school to serve the refreshments. An increasing number of such gatherings are being held in rural communities for various purposes and

[3] A rural Minnesota board member invited a group of people to her house to listen to a series of talks broadcast by the Minneapolis Family Welfare Society.

the social worker, with the help of the board, might well arrange to make social work the central topic of many of them. She could arrange combination programs with the county agricultural or home demonstration agents, and there would be short talks on each subject. The local parent-teachers' association offers another good combination. Others will suggest themselves.

The annual teachers' institute will also offer an opportunity for the worker to tell something of case work to what is perhaps the most potentially useful group in the county.[4] She might have mimeographed a definite statement of the ways in which the teachers and herself can be mutually helpful and give or send this to each teacher following the talk; also a simple form which the teacher may use in reporting problems, with spaces for names, ages, addresses, and reason for referring.

County-wide meetings of township trustees offer an opportunity to reach another important group, the members of which may be exceedingly helpful to the case work organization.

She will also find that talks to normal students and sociology classes in the high schools, as well as to high school students in general, are worth while. High school seniors going on to the university will be planning courses in accordance with a special line of work. There is no reason why rural case work

[4] Mary E. Richmond: *Social Diagnosis,* Chapter XI, "Schools as Sources," may be used as a basis for these talks.

should not appeal to the finest of these rural youngsters. They are familiar with the other professions; they should know also about social case work as it applies to their own community. It is especially important for the worker to reach the high school normal students who are probably going to teach in district schools.

Newspapers. Newspaper publicity is especially valuable in the country because newspapers and farm magazines are practically the only reading matter in many homes. There will be a daily newspaper if the county seat is large enough and probably two or three weekly papers, published in different parts of the county.

Probably there will be a local correspondent for some newspaper in every village and town. The social worker should make the acquaintance of both editors and correspondents. They are usually glad to publish any items of news regarding the activities of the society and, if the worker explains the reasons, they will usually be willing to keep out of the papers accounts of juvenile court cases and spectacular case stories.[5] She should furnish them with publicity concerning meetings of all kinds, with names of speakers and subjects presented, monthly reports, favorable comments of well known local people on the work and names of those attending conferences,

[5] The spectacular case which gets into the papers, before the social worker is called in, may be made the basis of careful newspaper interpretation.

with a write-up of some of the meetings which have a bearing on local problems. Some editors ask for a weekly article about the work. This is excellent publicity and may take the form of a series of articles written by the executive and one or two board members. In using case stories, however, the worker should take special care not to reveal the identity of the families. The social worker or her assistant should clip and file carefully all publicity as this will be helpful for reference and interpretation later on.

County Fair. The County Fair offers another opportunity for publicity through a booth with posters, pamphlets, and other educational material. The worker may plan this in co-operation with the county nurse who will arrange to weigh children.

In one county the social worker and nurse, with the help of volunteer workers, provided a rest room which was badly needed. Rocking chairs, a few cots and cribs, screens and rugs made up the simple equipment of this place where mothers with small children were thankful to rest. The social worker found that it provided also a means of friendly contact with a large number of people.

Interpretation and Financing. Preceding a campaign for funds, the social worker will want to arrange for intensive interpretation, through newspaper publicity, special meetings, and talks to organizations. It is a good plan, she will find, to observe trade areas in organizing committees and assigning lists. She may ask the schools to make posters and the children to carry home printed material, thus saving at least part of the expense of mailing.

Agencies have conducted house-to-house and farm-to-farm campaigns with more or less success. Another method is for the worker and the members of the board to approach a selected list in each community. Their aim would be for a proportionately larger number of contributors than in a city campaign, as the average amount contributed will be much smaller. They must also allow more time for soliciting in the open country because of distances, weather conditions, and the demands of farming. In general, they should take care not to conduct too exhaustive a campaign, and not to conduct an intensive campaign too frequently.

RAISING PRIVATE FUNDS

When a campaign is on for private funds the board or a committee of the organization should carry the responsibility. There are few county community chests. The county seat may be large enough to have one, but unless there are active in the county four or five strong social work and health agencies and unless the total budget they plan for is large enough to justify the employment of at least a part-time chest executive, any consideration of a chest would seem unsound. In any case, the Association of Community Chests and Councils [6] should be consulted at the beginning.

If a campaign is planned annually the worker

[6] Address Graybar Bldg., 43d and Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.

and the board should take care to see that it does not conflict with the campaigns of other agencies. There may well be joint consultations as to budgets, in view of the total which the agencies expect the community to give during one year. Instead of the annual campaign, the agency may consider the development of a list of contributors, with subscriptions annually renewable over a period of years. It will be possible for a committee to do almost all the work on this, though the board should make one or two of its members responsible for checking up on subscriptions falling due each month and obtaining a certain number of new contributors. This plan will require an initial campaign but, if carefully followed up, another campaign should not be necessary.

In planning the dates for a campaign, the worker and the board must keep in mind the farmers' busy seasons, such as harvest time and threshing time. Perhaps the lull following the threshing season is best for raising money. Farmers will then probably have a better idea of what they have to count on for the coming year. In a year of poor crops, the agency should not plan for an extension of work which means an increase in the budget for not only will the farmers be hard up but the banks and stores which give them credit will be in the same condition.

A county will naturally have proportionately fewer leaders than the average city, fewer men and women with the devotion, understanding, and initiative necessary to the successful conduct of a cam-

paign. Those who care most are often the busiest and must leave the execution of their plans to others who are less able. For this reason a county executive must often give considerable assistance to a campaign committee. She must use her best judgment in determining how far she shall go and how much time she shall give, taking care not to relieve the committee or board of its final responsibility.[7]

The worker and the campaign committee may encourage the raising of money in various ways. Money-raising by suppers, dances, and other social functions is a time-honored country custom. In one county a teachers' institute decided to devote all their school programs, home talent plays, and so on to raising money for children needing special care. A county receiving home for children organized local branches in every community—sometimes of young people, sometimes of adults—which took a kind of competitive pride in earning money and making gifts of food and clothing to the home. The individual amounts were small but the total was a respectable one. Is there not a suggestion here for a case working agency?

Once the money is raised—or even during the campaign—there is one difficulty that the board often meets with in a county. This is the desire on the part of people in one community that the money

[7] Financial campaigns are fully considered in Francis H. McLean: *The Family Society*. Family Welfare Association of America, New York, N. Y., p. 101.

raised there be spent there. Special interpretation of case work as a county-wide undertaking and the inter-dependence of all sections of the county is the obvious answer but the point is not always easy to drive home, especially where there is rivalry among communities.

General Financing. The question of financing is also a frequent cause of misunderstanding with other agencies. The organization of a new agency often appears to those already established as a possible hindrance to the success of their campaigns for funds. This situation calls for a special effort to interpret case work to the executive and boards of these agencies, and to convince them of the value of the case work program to their own work and to the community as a whole. It demands vision on the part of the social worker and ability to communicate this vision to others. Out of this unflagging urge to interpret may grow in time an informal group—perhaps three or four at first—representing the different agencies, who will try to consider the needs of the county as a whole and plan accordingly.

IX. SCOPE OF WORK AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

SCOPE OF THE CASE WORKER'S JOB

ONE of the most important problems which the organization will face is that of the heavy load of work which the case worker must carry. The number of families with whose problems she will help—or, in other words, her "case load"—is bound to increase rapidly. In many rural counties in which there is only one case worker who carries executive responsibility, the case load ranges from 100 to 400 families and the work involves traveling from 600 to 1,000 miles a month. The case worker will need the complete understanding of her board and all the help the members can give her in meeting the almost overwhelming demands upon her time and energy.

There is a tendency on the part of private citizens and public officials alike to place upon her responsibility for every variety of service. Many, perhaps most, of these requests fall within the limits of her task, that is, they have to do with the adjustments of families and individuals and with related community problems, but she should have clearly in

mind the scope of her task and refuse to respond to calls which fall outside these limits. Many rural workers have dissipated their energies and lost opportunities for developing community resources by indiscriminate acceptance of manifold tasks. Yielding may be expedient under certain circumstances, but giving way beyond a certain point shows lack of courage and resourcefulness and adds unnecessarily to the already heavy load.

In assuming responsibility for services which do fall within the scope of her task, the board may do much to lighten these if there is constant and careful interpretation of the function of the organization. This function is not to relieve the people in the county of responsibility for their problems but to share that responsibility with them.

This implies a partnership between the people of the county and the social worker. The people may ask the social worker for advice and assistance on many problems, for which they do not expect her to assume full responsibility; she in turn may go to them for help with problems in which she is finally responsible.

For example, in many rural counties they ask the social worker to act as attendance officer. This may easily consume a large portion of her time unless it is possible to limit her work to those children who present especially difficult problems in school. Unless the law assigns this duty to the case worker, the board should try to transfer the responsibility to the schools as soon as they can be brought to see the need of a competent attendance officer.

Requests may come from the schools and from parent-

teachers' associations for investigations of the need of school children for shoes and clothing; and from the public officials for investigations in regard to hospital care. In accepting such responsibilities the social worker must be sure that the services rendered permit constructive case work and are not merely to protect from imposition those making the request.

The social worker should not try to take over *all* the family problems of the community. If a family which has been helped by a volunteer society comes to the social worker independently, she should not fail to consult, from the very beginning, the members of that society who know the family best. Miss Richmond speaks of a clergyman who mildly reproached a young social worker thus: "You make your investigation and form your plans, and then assign me a part in them; but I want to come in at the very beginning where my people are concerned." [1] This suggests a key to all rural relationships in both family case work and community planning.

In general, good case work, constant interpretation, patience, and tact are essential in establishing co-operative relationships. And always the social worker must recognize the integrity of the various churches and societies already established and respect their natural desire to help their own people. In order to function smoothly, it might be wise to work out a schedule whereby the case worker would make the original investigation; the society and case

[1] Mary E. Richmond: *Social Diagnosis.* Russell Sage Foundation, 1917, pp. 292-296.

worker would make the plan jointly with the family; and some one member of the society would assume responsibility for following through with the family on the plans thus made, always in consultation with the worker.

Intensive Work. Several rural social workers have found that when they divided their time and energies among all the families for whom they were responsible it was difficult to do satisfactory work with any of them. Working on a plan of devoting to a few carefully chosen families the time and attention necessary for the best service of which they were capable, they found it possible to do this intensive work without seriously decreasing the time which they were able to give to each of the other families under their care. The advantage of such a plan lies not only in the promise of a more satisfactory adjustment in the families selected, but in the material such a situation offers for an interpretation of case work on the basis of the constructive work actually done in the county. There is a value also in the opportunity afforded the social worker to put forth her best efforts and consistently follow through with difficult problems. When the worker must scatter her time and energy over a heavy load and attempt no intensive work, she is only too apt to become discouraged and lose faith in the possibilities of creative work.

Even if it is possible to give special attention to but two or three families, or only one, the effort

should prove worth while. In selecting the families, the social worker should consider several factors: Since she will have to make frequent visits and consultations, she should choose a family whose home is in a relatively accessible part of the county. She should not select a family which has been "on the county" for years, or receiving material relief from other sources over a long period. Perhaps she will find the greatest possibilities for constructive work in a family where the father and mother are striving to meet their first serious problems of adjustment and she sees a possibility of preventing the breaking up of their home. In general, she will find it wise to select those problems which offer opportunity for preventive rather than corrective work.

Expansion of the Program. A vivid realization of the worker's heavy load and all that it involves may lead to a serious consideration of securing a second case worker, as soon as financial resources permit. This need, however, should be weighed carefully against other needs of the county and the case work program should not expand at the expense of more important developments. For example, if there is no public health program, the initiation of a nursing service under suitable auspices would usually take precedence over the employment of a second case worker, and the executive of the case working agency will probably be the first to urge it.

When the time comes to plan for the coming of the second case worker the question will immediately

arise as to whether she will act as assistant in the general case work program or divide the load, with the case worker who is already on the job, in accordance with a specialized case work approach.

Specialization in the average rural county seems unwise, if only from the practical considerations of time and distance. Two case workers, following each other over an area of from 600 to 1,000 square miles, each dealing with special problems in every part of the county, are apt to arouse criticism and create misunderstanding. There have been instances where serious criticism has been aimed at social workers who accompanied the county superintendent of schools or the county nurse about the county in order to reduce traveling expenses! On the whole it would seem advisable to divide the work on a geographical basis, each worker dealing with all the case work problems occurring in the part of the county to which she has been assigned.

If, however, the agency does decide on some form of specialization, there arises the question: shall the agency establish a permanent department in which a case worker with the appropriate special training will be employed? Or shall the new work be undertaken only temporarily, until its value is proved and it is taken over by another organization?

In general, it would seem advisable to continue the work under the original organization, unless special conditions within the county necessitate the creation of a new agency or the transferral of the new

work to an organization already in existence. For instance, visiting teaching or probation work might well be undertaken with the idea of transferring them later to the schools or the juvenile court.

It is probable that considerable time, perhaps several years, may elapse before an addition to the staff is possible. During this period the board and the executive together will find it necessary to give careful consideration to ways and means of meeting the heavy demands made upon the organization, taking care to relieve the executive of such strain as may cause discouragement or impair her health.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Leadership. In the discovery of community needs, as revealed by the case work, and in the endeavor to meet these needs by the development of resources in their proper place in the community program, the social worker should recognize the responsibility of the people in the county and her partnership with them. She will have many calls on her initiative and ingenuity, as she strives to help county leaders in making and carrying out plans. Part of her responsibility, too, will be the discovery of new leaders. Her close association with people in different parts of the county who are dealing with family problems may reveal unsuspected qualities of leadership in people who have hitherto taken no prominent part in community activities. Her task will be to discover the type of work in which these people are most

interested and, when the need for this type of work arises, to present the challenge to them and at the same time to offer her assistance.

They will often be outstanding people with social vision, whom she has sought out naturally in the course of a general educational campaign. The most helpful are often those whom she has discovered through their natural interest in certain families, and whom she has consulted in the course of initial inquiries.

Undoubtedly these citizens have long been concerned with the problems of the less fortunate families in their communities, and if the social worker is wise, she will appreciate the fact that her task is to assist them to the best of her ability and that she really has come in as an advisor and a partner.

Volunteers. A volunteer who has been for thirty years or more a neighbor of a family referred to the agency naturally knows more about the family history and the present situation than the average social worker could unearth in a month. Called on for information, the volunteer often advances a definite theory as to the way in which the problems should be met—a way perhaps that the neighborhood has applied for years to that particular family. At this point the social worker needs an open mind, much humility, and abundant tact. She must realize that the problem belongs by right of long acquaintance and treatment to the volunteer, not to her. But

she must also realize that, although the volunteer has known the family well for many years, she may have overlooked or not considered carefully enough certain important factors about the situation which, if recognized, would change her approach to the situation.

Much as the volunteers may learn of the principles of case work and much as they themselves may help, the social worker soon realizes that their contribution to her own education is the most surprising part of the whole process. Necessary as is the detailed information regarding local people and conditions which comes to her from the volunteers, even more invaluable is an understanding of those invisible barriers in business, society, and religion which she must respect if she is to avoid difficulties.

Rural social workers sometimes discount the helpfulness of volunteers on the ground that they are inclined to gossip. Galpin says in his discussion of rural psychology in *Rural Life* [2] that the gossip of country people is not a symptom of malicious intent, but rather of real, though somewhat crude, interest in other people. The agency and social worker both must learn to capitalize this interest in human beings by persuading volunteers that the welfare of the families is served better by silence than by discussion. They must strive to direct this interest in people from talk to work. On the other hand, so many

[2] *Op. cit.*

of the family problems are known throughout the community that some rural workers have come to the conclusion that it is a good idea for the correct information to be generally available, especially since an understanding of a family situation may change the attitude of the community toward the family and help in developing family and community responsibility.

Volunteers can help in finding homes for children and old people, and will often assume entire responsibility.

In one instance, a volunteer who had taken responsibility for two old people kept up a friendly contact with them for several years, even after they had moved to another county.

A recipient of a mother's allowance cultivated a garden, the first in the fifteen years of her married life, simply because a volunteer expected her to.

Another volunteer planned the diet for a mothers' allowance family, got a man in the village to furnish and plough up a garden lot, secured seed from the agricultural college, and taught the three oldest children to care for the garden.

The superintendent of a local hospital cared for a delinquent girl over night until she could be taken to the institution to which she had been committed.

A busy neighbor of one family took half a day to drive to town to a sale to buy articles needed to equip a kitchen in a motherless home.

One social worker found it most helpful to put in writing for the use of a volunteer a summary of the conclusions reached in their conferences about a family with whom the volunteer was working. The brief statement included some characterization of the members of the family, outlined the more im-

portant problems and suggested ways in which the volunteer might help.

Committees. In any rural agency, committees may prove very useful. But the agency had best go rather slowly in organizing local committees throughout the county and should organize them only to meet concrete needs. Carefully chosen groups in strategic communities are valuable, not only for the discussion of the problems of local families but for the consideration of general problems. Volunteers who have been helpful with family problems in a particular neighborhood would be the logical nucleus of such committees.

A striking illustration of partnership between a social worker and the citizens of a rural community is found in a town of 1,500 in a county in the middle west. A number of people in this town had been doing for some time what the social worker described as "beautiful volunteer work." She assisted them in various ways and they visited families and assumed many responsibilities. They had frequent consultations because of their common interest and, out of these discussions, a "Welfare Committee" grew quite naturally. The social worker rightly considered that the responsibility and the actual job in that community was theirs and that her function was to help them in every way possible; and the committee gradually assumed some financial responsibility for the case work organization. The social worker is now looking to this group for an illuminating contribution to community thinking on rural problems and methods of work.

The professional attitude shown by one volunteer county board in Minnesota which handles problems of the most delicate nature is evidence that there are in rural communities citizens who can be trusted with confidential matters. State field representatives help these boards through attendance at board meetings, occasional visits to families, and correspondence with board members on the details of their work. The success of

this long-range partnership method offers encouragement to a local worker in her efforts to assist volunteers in distant parts of the county.[3]

The social worker may keep in touch with volunteers who live at a distance through committee meetings, consultation with individual members, correspondence, and by the telephone. In using the telephone for the discussion of case work problems, the social worker and volunteers should both keep in mind the difficulties which may result from the use of party lines.

[3] See also Wilma Van Dusseldorp: "The Development of Social Agencies in Rural Communities," *The Family,* March, 1933, p. 20.

X. RELATIONSHIPS OF BOARD AND WORKER

PARTNERSHIP

IMPORTANT as is the case worker's work with her clients, equally important in a different way is her work with the group that sponsors her. It is most important for the relationship between the social worker and the board to which she is responsible to be one of partnership. The extent to which this partnership may develop will depend upon the time which the board members are willing and able to give and upon their interest in and understanding of the work. But it will also depend upon the ability of the social worker to interest the board by a vivid presentation of the problems which arise—upon her skill in interpreting the work to them and showing their part in it.

It is all too easy for the case worker who has had no previous experience as an executive—and probably none at all with a public agency or in a rural community—to go quietly ahead struggling with a huge case load by herself, making careful, detailed statistical reports to the county board and answering the inevitable criticism as best she may, but neglect-

ing to interpret her work either to the officials or to the community. This situation points to eventual failure. When adverse criticisms arise no one but the case worker will be likely to know the answers. And her word does not go far because many of the critics will look upon her as an outsider who is naturally defending the work she is paid to do. If in her case work she unknowingly runs into factions and stirs up animosity—originating probably in something entirely foreign to the case work itself—a storm may easily arise which will end social work in that county for many years. The same result may come from a change in the personnel of the county board or some important county office where a newly elected officer keeps his campaign promise of retrenchment by doing away with social work.

A majority of the members of the county board and of an influential, representative group of private citizens, many of whom are substantial taxpayers, must have a thorough understanding and appreciation of the case worker's task if such contingencies are to be avoided. This understanding will best develop if: (1) the social worker and the board arrange to organize an advisory committee; (2) there is a purposeful and continuous effort on the part of the social worker to interpret case work to the county board and to the general public; (3) the social worker and the board succeed in getting an increasing number of people throughout the county to participate in the case work itself.

BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings of the board will ordinarily be held at the county seat or at the office of the agency. However, if a majority of the members live at some distance and find regular attendance difficult, a more convenient place should be selected. In any case, it is advisable to hold meetings from time to time in different parts of the county. Perhaps each of these meetings may be made a special occasion in the community in which it is held. For instance, the business meeting of the board, held in the afternoon, might be followed by a supper, prepared by a church society or some other organization, with a program of talks and music by local talent arranged for the evening. The supper and evening program would, of course, be open to the public.

Notices of all meetings should be sent several days in advance and it is especially important to give adequate notice of a change in date and place, because of the distances which many of the board members must travel in order to come. Nor is distance the only consideration—the means of transportation available is also a factor, especially during the season of the year when the condition of the roads may prohibit the use of cars in some parts of the county.

In order to attend a 3:00 o'clock meeting, one board member who did not drive a car was obliged to take a bus and leave home at 8:00 in the morning, and she could not return

until the next day, although she lived only twenty miles from the place of meeting.

When members make such an effort to attend, it is particularly important that the meeting be worth while—carefully planned, with a vivid report of the work and a clear presentation of the problems which the members must consider. Because a county board is scattered and attendance is likely to be irregular, it is best to send with the notices of the meeting copies of the reports to be submitted and a statement of the subjects to be brought up for discussion; and, after the meeting, to send the minutes to all members.

Later the social worker may, as she goes about the county, drop in on the members who missed the last meeting and tell them about it. Members of the board are busy people with many interests of which the case work problem is but one. No matter how great their sympathy and understanding they will naturally find it difficult to keep in close touch with the work unless the social worker constantly brings it to their attention and takes advantage of every opportunity to tell them of the problems she is meeting in her day-to-day work.

In addition to the more general reports, the program of every board meeting may well include the presentation and discussion of specific case work problems in regard to which the case worker needs the advice of the members and the help which they are able to give because of their wider experience in

county affairs. It is also advisable for the worker to ask the board to make definite decisions as to the methods of procedure in certain cases, because in a rural county there is constant danger of misunderstanding and adverse criticism of action taken on certain types of cases, particularly those requiring court action.

For example, when children are abused and conditions in the home are so bad that they resist all efforts of the case worker to improve them, the safety and welfare of the children demand that the court break up the home and make some other provision for the care of the children. There may be people in the county who, because they do not know all the facts, will accuse the case worker of being hard-hearted in asking the court to take these children away from their parents and this will bring criticism upon the whole organization. In such cases, the social worker should give the board full knowledge of the situation and secure their approval before she takes any action. This places the responsibility for the decision upon the board, and gives the members the information which they will need in answering criticism.

In addition to keeping board members in touch with case work through discussion at meetings, the social worker may also ask them for help and advice through frequent consultations at their homes or at their places of business.

One county agency has a board of fifty members which meets quarterly with a formal program and action taken only on important matters. As the members represent all sections the meetings provide opportunity for the consideration of problems which affect the county as a whole. Between the quarterly meetings an executive committee carries the responsibility and the social worker keeps the board members in touch with the case work through consulting them directly.

A MUTUAL INTERPRETATION

In any rural community people are going to ask why it is necessary to have an outside person for this work, why a trained person, how was she trained, is she worth it, and other similar questions. Of course, the way in which the social worker does her work and her attitude in her numerous local contacts will be the best possible answer to these and similar questions. However, explicit answers will also be necessary and it is here that the wise social worker will let her board do the talking. It is their observation of her work and their recognition of the skill with which she is handling a difficult job which will form the basis for the most effective interpretation of what the agency itself and the social worker in person are attempting to do. It is only through a continuing partnership that the board will be in a position to observe and interpret.

The board must also interpret the community to the worker not only in a once-for-all manner but continuously. The social worker may be strongly tempted to make plans for drastic changes and push for the development of new facilities which are needed in her work. The members of the board will need to remind her not only for the sake of the community but for her own sake that the program must be developed very slowly and that every step forward must be carefully fitted to the facilities already existing in the community.

Both the board and the social worker—as well as the people with whom her work brings her in daily contact—must guard against taking too seriously those criticisms which may be of a minor nature and may safely be ignored. A fine sense of discrimination is needed in order to decide which criticisms are basic, which merely indicative of temporary irritation. Some of them will be justified by her own failure to respect the traditions and conventions of the community, which have perhaps been so far unknown to her. A willingness to make a change in her attitude or method of working in response to such comments will be a proof of her own wisdom and adaptability. She should take the board members into her confidence on all important matters and secure their help in meeting serious criticisms, but she should avoid running to them about every little thing which comes up. She will need to discriminate carefully between what is their concern and what is hers.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE TASK

Co-operation in such a spirit promises to bring to social worker and rural people alike an opportunity for a rich and satisfying experience and enables them to make a distinctive contribution to the solution of that most important of rural problems, the achievement of better living in the country.

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK AGENCIES

Which May be Consulted

American Association of Hospital Social Workers
18-20 East Division St., Chicago, Illinois

American Public Welfare Association
850 East 58th St., Chicago, Illinois

Association of Community Chests and Councils
Graybar Building, 420 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.

Child Welfare League of America
130 East 22d St., New York, N. Y.

Family Welfare Association of America
130 East 22d St., New York, N. Y.

National Association of Travelers Aid Societies
25 West 43rd St., New York, N. Y.

National Committee for Mental Hygiene
450 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

National Probation Association
450 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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